

MARIE of the
INCARNATION
MYSTIC and MISSIONARY



The Ursuline Monastery, Quebec.

BY MOTHER DENIS
MAHONEY, O.S.U.

MARIE of the INCARNATION

MYSTIC and MISSIONARY

MOTHER DENIS MAHONEY, O.S.U.

*The definitive biography of the famous
Mère Marie of the Ursulines.*

In 1639, Marie Guyart sailed from France with a handful of companions to establish a mission of the Ursuline Order in the harsh, untamed wilderness of New France (Quebec). Their purpose: to bring Christianity to the Indian children and formal schooling to the children of the hardy French traders and trappers who had begun to settle the Northern Frontier.

After a hazardous crossing, Mère Marie and her small, brave band moved into the ill-equipped, two-room house that was to serve as chapel, convent, school, and hospital. Only Marie's indomitable faith and courage enabled them to endure the almost unbelievable hardships and cruel winters of this barren land. She led them through struggles which were compounded by raging smallpox epidemics, by the constant menace of hostile Iroquois tribes

(Continued on back flap)

MOTHER LOME GILL
MEMORIAL LIBRARY
COLLEGE OF R. W. ROCHELLE
NEW ROCHELLE NEW YORK

WORTHINGTON
YOUNG LIBRARY
WORTHINGTON
YOUNG LIBRARY

MARIE OF THE
INCARNATION



MARIE OF THE INCARNATION

Mystic and Missionary



MOTHER DENIS MAHONEY, O.S.U.

DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC.
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

1964

Nihil obstat:
James A. Reynolds, Ph.D.
Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur:
✠ Francis Cardinal Spellman
Archbishop of New York
June 10, 1964

The nihil obstat and imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the nihil obstat and imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

The author gratefully acknowledges permission from Editions de Desclée de Brouwer to quote passages from *Marie de l'Incarnation: Ecrits Spirituels et Historiques* (4 vols., Paris, 1929-39) edited by Albert Jamet, O.S.B. The translation of these excerpts was made by the author. Also several short passages in this book were first published in *The Month* in an article on Venerable Marie by the author.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 64-19285
Copyright © 1964 by Denis Mahoney
All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

231
4705
M36
143
C.2

To

Reverend Mother Joan of Arc Cronin, O.S.U.

Mater Fidelis

100604

9/29/64

PREFACE

A visitor walking through the Old City of Quebec might possibly never notice the wrought-iron gate which is all the passer-by can glimpse of the vast Ursuline Monastery hidden within. This building symbolizes the oldest convent of the New World, for it was the first permanent home of the Ursuline nuns who had come to New France in 1639 under the intrepid leadership of Marie de l'Incarnation, an Ursuline from the city of Tours.

It is strange that this adventurous and holy woman, with her many titles to human fame, should have remained so long unknown. Her obscurity does not proceed from lack of materials, for there is extant an abundance of her letters and notes. Yet, in English at least, no serious attempt has been made at a full-scale biography. In French she has fared somewhat better, especially at the scholarly hands of Dom Albert Jamet, O.S.B., whose careful edition of her letters and spiritual notes has made her writings available to a modern world. Unfortunately, death cut short the work of this devoted editor, and his proposed edition remains incomplete.

The materials which, innocently enough, Marie left for her biographers are of incomparable value. She wrote two lengthy accounts of her spiritual life, one for her director in 1633 and another, three times this length, for her son in 1654; a collection of letters numbering today 229 (although her latest biographer has conjectured that she wrote twelve to thirteen thousand during the course of her life); two private retreats and other miscellaneous spiritual notes. It is to her son, Dom Claude Martin, O.S.B., that we owe the initial preservation of much of this material; for less than five years after his mother's death in 1672, he published her life, which was followed in 1681 by an edition of her letters and by her retreats in the following year.

This life by her son is not only a monument of filial devotion but of seventeenth-century hagiography as well. Dom Claude was, at the date of writing, Grand Prior of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Denis, and by that very fact was drawn into the pious style of the contemporary "Christian Humanists." He professes to see the dangers which surround his high enterprise, yet he does not succeed in avoiding them. He realizes, he says, the perils of "exaggerating the merits of those we love"; he agrees with those who hold that it is the utter simplicity of his mother's writings which will edify; he professes to see in her wording a divine inspiration, adding that to change anything would be to "wish to correct the Holy Spirit." Yet in the end, he is held fast by the spirit of his age, and presents us with another "pious biography." The original text is often mutilated with scant regard for chronology; words that had soared with charming ease are converted into the turgid prose of the eulogium; moral exhortations dog the heels of every chapter. Yet the laboring monk, for all his effort, cannot efface the limpid flow of thought and expression which characterized his mystic mother.

The account of her spiritual life which she had sent to her son in 1654 had been written not without misgiving and, as she explained in an accompanying letter, only after the command of her spiritual director. Perhaps she feared Dom Claude's indiscreet admiration, for in a letter dated September 17 of the same year she cautions him:

I do not want anyone to share this communication . . . and I beg of you to write on the cover of this, "Conscience matter," so that no one will touch it or glance at it without scruple. . . . If you should fall ill and be in danger of death, have someone throw this in the fire, or rather, so that I may be ever more assured, send it to my niece, who will take care of it for me, if I should survive you. . . . This letter is short so that it will make more of an impression on you.

With charming insouciance, Dom Claude threw this maternal counsel to the four winds and, even before his mother's death, began plans for her biography. Whatever evaluation we place upon his style as a *littérateur*, we can have only gratitude for his labors, for without his work a biography of Marie Guyart would

be a hopeless task. Such a biography seems peculiarly apropos in a world which is concerned with far horizons, with advanced missionary techniques, with a defense of the rights of God in the world of man, and with the relation between material activity and spiritual values. Even the spirit of ecumenism was not unknown to the woman who could write over four hundred years ago, "I present Thee all these souls that You may make them one with Thee."

Although I would not attempt a complete acknowledgment of all those who have helped to make this book a reality, I must express my gratitude to the Ursulines of Quebec without whose gracious help and hospitality my work would have been impossible. It is to their archivist, Mother St. Joseph, that I must express my particular thanks, for she placed at my disposal not only the Archives of the Monastery but her own rich store of information as well. Her patience and unflagging confidence that someday I would achieve what I had set out to do are in large measure responsible for this biography.



PART I

“Love is my name”

CHAPTER 1

In the early spring of 1639 a young man walked down the muddy streets of the city of Orléans toward his student lodgings. He had just said his last farewell to his mother, and he was seized with that aimlessness of body and mind which suffering often brings in its wake. Claude Martin was nineteen years old, and for over eight years he had lived the lonely life of a boy who has no home of his own. Had he been asked a few hours before, he would have said with cynical bravado that the wound of childhood separation from his mother had long been healed; but now he realized that the passionate devotion of the twelve-year-old child was still alive.

Yet, as he wandered listlessly through the city, only half-aware of the people who jostled against him in the narrow streets, he felt a peace, a warmth far deeper than resignation growing in his heart. For the first time he began to understand the strange, heroic pattern of his mother's life. Eight years before she had left him at the gate of the Ursuline monastery at Tours to follow the vocation of a cloistered nun; now, less than an hour ago, she had admitted that within a month she hoped to sail for New France to establish a mission for the Indians.

Claude would not have known of his mother's proposed venture so soon had it not been for his aunt, Madame Laguiole, who had sent a messenger from Tours to Orléans with the startling news that his mother was soon to embark for the New World. He had waited in the courtyard of the inn until the closed carriage came to a halt, and as his mother, now Mother Marie de l'Incarnation, descended, her first glance fell upon the taut, rebellious face of her son. Claude assumed a role of surprise as he watched his mother struggle to maintain her composure. A pleasurable coincidence, he commented, and might he

ask where a cloistered nun might be traveling to? To Paris, Marie replied, in her anguish evading the whole truth. But Claude's next question pinned the issue squarely in place: Are you sure, Mother, that you are not going farther than that? There was no need for an answer; Claude obviously knew the whole tale.

Even at this moment of despair, the son could not but admire the poise of this mother who, in her long black robes, with the shock of pain still in her eyes, stood poised and quiet in the midst of the bustlings of the public court. To his accusations, his bitter invectives, his scorn, her strong, tranquil voice had only a single reply: My son, this is what God wants; our part is not to make decisions but to obey. It was, once again, the old refrain, the cradle song to whose melody he had been raised. She had never tried to reason with him in a human way, she had never minimized the pain of separation for either of them; instead, she had set forth in inexorable terms the primary principle of Christian life—obedience to the will of God.

As Claude recalled the years of his boyhood, his bitterness softened, and with a new maturity he began to understand this incredible woman of whose flesh he had been born. The composure which he had formerly interpreted as the coldness of an indifferent heart, he realized now must have been bought at a great price. He heard again the tense voice which had told him one terrible day that his mother was about to leave him forever; he remembered the dark, shadowed eyes and the last determined smile as she turned from him to enter the cloistered gate. He saw now that all his tantrums, his hysterical entreaties for her to come home to him had not fallen on merciless ears. When she told him that she would always love him with a mother's heart, she was not uttering empty sentiments but a costly truth. Years later, recalling that first farewell, Marie wrote to Claude: "So great was the pain of this separation that I thought my very bones would be wrenched from their sockets."

What the boy of twelve was too young to sense, the young man of nineteen began to perceive, and before Claude slept that night he offered to God the sacrifice of his mother. The eight years of rebellion were over and this "child of tears" had at last received the grace for which Marie had prayed so long.

Claude's mother was at this time thirty-nine years old. She

had been born in the city of Tours, Province of Touraine, on October 28, 1599. The day following, she was baptized and officially registered in the church of St. Saturninus as the fourth child and second daughter of Florent Guyart and Jeanne Michelet. It was not a bad year in which to face the world, for France at the turn of the sixteenth century was drawing a grateful if cautious breath. If it was not the best of times, neither was it the worst, and there were few who did not see in the new era a presage of peace and hope. In midsummer of 1593 the great bells of St. Denis had rung out to an expectant Paris the glad tidings of Henry of Navarre's abjuration from heresy, and in the years that followed he proved faithful to his promises. Even suspicious Catholics who watched with hostile interest the policies by which this keen administrator welded France into national unity could find little fault with what they saw. The soldier who had seen that no strength of arms could win him the throne while he remained a Huguenot had long since realized that political unity must be based upon religious unity, and it was toward that end that he labored.

The Protestant League, which for over twenty years had excited and sustained religious war, was pushed to the wall and finally annihilated. In 1603, a Jesuit priest Pierre Coton, was invited by the King to remain at the court as confessor and adviser, despite the fact that popular opinion held the Jesuits in increasing disfavor. The King's initial distrust, however, had given way to sincere affection for his "whispering counselor," and many of his policies bear the stamp of Father Coton's discreet influence.¹ Soon the time seemed ripe for a more inclusive and formal promulgation of religious toleration, and in 1599 there was registered at Paris the famous Edict of Nantes, which not only decreed a program of toleration but provided for its enforcement. By the turn of the century Henry IV had won the respect of even the suspicious. France was at peace both within and without, and even the ravages of famine and plague were for a time allayed.

As for the city of Tours itself, it was, with all its beauty and heritage of centuries, fast becoming a thriving commercial town. Situated in the heart of Touraine, it was to its townspeople the most beautiful spot in the world. The visitor, standing on the

Quai du Pont Neuf with his back to the city of six thousand households, were he to look eastward along the Loire, would see rising in fairy-book splendor the great chateaux of the aristocracy with their imposing medieval turrets and battlements and their wealth of Renaissance painting and sculpture.

But not all of Tours lived in chateaux, and although the combined reports of the pastors of the parish churches could boast of the spiritual vigor of their flocks (50,000 communicants during the pascal season of 1598, they averred), the toll of lives which the plague took almost annually told its own story of poverty and misery and disease. With its population of underpaid silk workers and garrulous, unkempt dock workers, Tours might easily have been referred to, had the expression been current, as a waterfront town.

But Tours was no worse off than any other French town where merchants and craftsmen shuffled uncertainly from the worn methods of the Middle Ages to the bright, unproved ones of the Renaissance. Most visitors found it a pleasant city. Although the streets were narrow and cobbled unevenly, most of them permitted at least a minimum of light and air, and often they opened into wider courtlike areas where fountains provided water in abundance for the neighboring households. Of the houses themselves, built for the most part directly on the street with intriguing circular stairs covering most of the exterior, a traveler of the period comments: "Their houses are almost all built in the same manner, not elegant but very nice, made of wood and plaster—very high and covered with slates—extremely imposing, especially when viewed from afar or from some elevation."²

The street scenes were lively and amusing—the market women with their homemade wicker baskets, the wine criers with their voices often made doubly enthusiastic by their own wares, the glass seller with a basket slung across his back and another swinging from his arm, the great-muscled burly men coming from the nearby wharves with their sideless wheelbarrows on which two or three huge barrels might be precariously perched.

The miracle of it all was that business flourished as much as it did, for most of the people seemed more interested in hearing news than in working. A ship never drew near the docks without a cry and surge of the people to see it. They were always on

hand: eager to hear the news, quick, talkative, easy with jests and jibes. And when there were no ships' news and merchants' tales with which to waste their time, there was always the business of dancing and drinking and playing tennis—all merged with the continuous occupation of eating. "Concerning the French diet," the traveler remarked, "it is to keepe no diet; for they feede at all times, there being among them very few which beside their ordinary of dinner and supper, do not 'gouster,' as they call it, and make collations three or foure times the day, a thing as usual with the women as men, whome ye shall see in open streets before their dores, eate and drink together."³

Into such a city and at such a time was born Marie Guyart. Despite incomplete records concerning the date of her birth, there is no uncertainty concerning her parentage. Her mother was a Michelet, a family long known in the city and with a claim to noble blood, descended as she was from Les Babou de la Bourdaisière. Because of his distinguished service to the crown, Philibert Babou had been appointed Controller General of Finance in 1515 by Francis I. Of his eight children only five survived childhood, but of these five he could count a bishop, a cardinal, an abbess, and the master general of artillery under Charles IX.

Such success demanded a fitting setting, and in Old Tours, north of La Rue Colbert, Philibert built the Hôtel de l'Argentier. La Bourdaisière, as it was later called, was one of the finest houses in the city. It was a large house almost one hundred and twenty yards in length, three stories high, constructed in freestone with a strong stone staircase with delicately wrought-iron banisters. By 1647 the house passed from the Babou family, but it was a house that never lost its sense of *noblesse oblige*, for over a century later, during the rising terror of the Revolution, the children born within its walls were called with impertinent courage by such great Christian names as Vincent de Paul and Frances de Chantal, and it was rumored through Tours that a priest could find no safer nor more generous shelter than that provided at La Bourdaisière.

Thus the Michelets had connections of which they could be proud, and while it was no disgrace that Jeanne had married a master baker, it was a fact that Florent Guyart could boast

little of the fame of his ancestors. But he had a heritage of his own, for over a hundred years before, one of his great-uncles had been a member of the embassy which brought the hermit and wonder-worker of Calabria, Francis de Paule, from his hermitage in Italy to Plessis-les-Tours. The memory of those days spent in the company of one whom they revered as a saint and of the fervent blessing so often given by the wrinkled hands of this holy old man was one of the most cherished traditions of the Guyart family.

Noble blood or not, the baker Guyart had a nobility of character—an integrity, sound judgment and loyalty which made him trusted by his fellow workers and loved by his family of seven children.

To the man industrious and proud of his trade, baking was not a bad occupation, and it had been known that bakers retired in their middle years with a comfortable income amassed from their business. Whether or not baker Guyart retired from his shop it is difficult to say, but sometime during Marie's early childhood he moved with his family from the parish of St. Saturninus to the suburbs of St. Pierre des Corps in the eastern section of Old Tours. Perhaps fear of the plague caused this change of residence, for in 1602 victims of plague were found in St. Pierre le Puellier and, as always, the most crowded city areas were those hardest struck. Whatever the cause the move was made, and since Florent was still a comparatively young man there is every reason to believe that he again set up his trade in his new home. Doubtless the Guyart children were given many tasks to perform—the older ones carrying the large trays to the great brick oven, which in those days was often visible from the front room of the shop; the younger ones keeping the long thin rolls and squat oval loaves in neat arrangement on the open shelves and wooden counters which surrounded the room. Perhaps it was here that Marie acquired her business ability which played such a part in her later life. Certainly there was ample scope for practicing arithmetic as the customer's purchase was placed precariously in the round scale pan and balanced by the necessary amount of weights. Like all such families they lived above the shop in a house with mysterious eaves and gables and small dormer windows opening on the street.

But even in the fresher air of the suburbs, the mortality rate, especially among children, was still high; and in the winter of 1605, when Marie was six and a half, the city seethed with fear as the dreaded plague swept it from end to end with renewed vigor. It is hard to envisage the terror of those days when the city was a city of fear, with dead left in the streets and the dying boarded up in their own houses in a poor, futile attempt to prevent infection. The town officials set up a new bureau of health and the old regulations were stringently enforced. Beggars and vagabonds were forced out through the city gates; merchants from other towns, particularly those in which plague was known to exist, were refused entrance. It was a reign of terror, and a terror against which there seemed no appeal. The cause was not difficult to find: gutters loaded with trash, pools of stagnant water, the dirt and filth consequent upon outdoor butcheries and fish markets, together with the popular superstitions of the doctors, are sufficient explanation.

The Guyart family were spared, however, and in the fall of that anxious year of 1606 Marie celebrated her seventh birthday. And here the story turns from prose to poetry, for Marie, standing upon the threshold of her seventh year, was standing as well upon the threshold of her first mystic phenomenon. The cloud of predilection under which she had been sheltered suddenly burst wide to reveal the divine splendors within.

One night, some time during 1606, this child had a dream, and as she slept, she saw herself in the courtyard of a country school where she was playing with one of her friends. Writing almost fifty years later, she continued:

Lifting my eyes toward the sky I saw the heavens open and Our Lord Jesus Christ in human form come toward me through the air; seeing Him I cried to my friend, "Look, it is Our Lord—and He is coming to me." . . . When this most adorable Majesty drew near me, I felt my heart inflamed with His love. I began to hold out my arms to embrace Him, and He, the most beautiful of all the children of men, with a look full of sweetness and unutterable attractiveness, embraced me, and kissing me with indescribable love, asked, "Wilt thou be mine?"⁴

And the woman of fifty-four, writing from the poor draughty house of her Canadian mission, with the affairs of business always

about her, still exults with unwearied joy at the reply given so long ago by her child's heart, for continuing her narrative, she writes: "I answered, 'Yes.'"

Yes to what? That was a question she never asked. Yes to all of it: Yes to Him; Yes to the unknown, the strange, the apparently unnecessary exactions that love would ask. For the first time and for a moment only, the vision was vouchsafed to her, and to her answer given so readily there would never be denial.

Through the night the Guyart household slept on. In the street the city watch in his long mantle, with his bell hung about his neck, made his rounds from street to street, crying, "Rise, sleepers; pray to God for your trespasses." And in her bed a child lay, still breathing the long deep breaths of her first divine embrace.

It was an epoch when mystic dreams were, perhaps, a little too à la mode, and the reality of the presumed divine intervention was a ticklish one for the hagiographer, but in Marie's case her biographers with one accord have acclaimed the supernatural quality of her dream. It is precisely its efficacious influence upon her whole life that largely determines its supernatural reality. Renaudin, in his study of her mysticism, emphasizes the efficacy of this experience and further indicates that, despite the sublime states of prayer with which her later years were graced, for Marie, the dream of her childhood held a place of unique importance as the root from which the flower springs.⁵

Thus from her childhood, Marie Guyart was drawn into a spiritual movement which swept through France with the persistency and contagion of the plague itself and for which Brémond can find no better name than "*l'invasion mystique*." Religion, which had been so long under arms, had, at last, like the Red Cross Knight of Spenser's allegory, discovered its true happiness in the exercise of contemplation. Perhaps no century had a larger galaxy of saints and mystics. Names famous for sanctity follow one another in a mellifluous litany: it was the age of De Bérulle and De Condren of the Oratory, Francis de Sales and his eminent protégé Madame de Chantal, John Eudes preaching his cult of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Jean Jacques Olier of St. Sulpice, the incomparable Vincent de Paul and his spiritual daughter Louise de Marillac. Mystics abounded—both false mys-

tics and true: illuminists, quietists, and those who, like Jeanne Matel, remain an enigma to mystic theologians. Mistress and servant, soldier and statesman, all alike experienced supernatural dreams, divine touches, interior locutions. If some of this can be dismissed as mere exhibitionism or the work of disordered imaginations, much of it cannot. Even some of the most flamboyant among the mystics bear the divine stamp, for by them God was preparing a revivification of religious spirit which would be felt far beyond the boundaries of France.

From the moment of Marie's consecrating "yes," God assumed in a new measure the care of her soul and without intermediary guided her according to His will. In an age which seethed with spiritual direction Marie reached the age of twenty-four before she acquired a "director" properly so-called. She was guided by the Holy Spirit alone, not because she could not find a priest who could understand her, but—rare prerogative—because she felt no need for understanding. This delicate direction, coupled with the atmosphere of strong Christian faith and practices of family piety within her home, provided all that her child's soul needed. Although she realized the gravity of the question asked and of her answer, she felt no need for further explanation. What she had experienced was accepted with that clear-eyed solemnity so often seen in children of her age. She set forth upon a journey of virtue, little aware that her road was any different from the road of her companions. Already she had felt within her strong desires for prayer and virtue, for she found in these practices, as she herself relates, "sweetness and patience" and great devotion to Mary, whose name she bore. Of all joys, the greatest was to slip into one of the nearby churches, perhaps her parish church of St. Pierre des Corps or the great arched Cathedral of St. Martin on the Rue Fleury, and there, kneeling in a darkened corner, fix her eyes for hours at a time on the tabernacle. Other visitors came, made their devotions, and left, but the little girl in her long, tight-bodied dress sat quietly with her hands motionless in her lap and found it difficult to understand how people could come and go so quickly in this place where God was always waiting. She was too young to know that this was prayer; she only knew that here she was happy and that time slipped by with unaccountable rapidity.

Nothing so pleased Marie, both in these early years and, indeed,

throughout her life, as the festive ceremonies and processions of the Church, and in these Tours abounded. With the re-establishment of religious peace, monastic life was revived throughout France, and Tours in particular was swelled with the influx of religious orders. In a short space Capuchins, Carmelites, Hospitalières, Feuillants, Minims made foundations in the city. Pageants, processions, sermons—in short, all the panoply of religious festivity—was available to this child, who later wrote that the ceremonies of the Church were her daily sustenance.

With characteristic indifference to the merely external, Marie writes nothing of the years of her childhood. Contemporary events form no part of her autobiography and in silence she passes over the murder of Henry IV and the accession to the throne of the child-king, Louis XIII, who at his father's death was but eight years, seven months, and eighteen days old. France, so weary of conflict, felt again the threat of war as it watched with grim foreboding the wary intrigue between the Queen Mother, Marie de Medici, and her hotheaded rival, the Prince de Condé. But whatever the crisis, people ate bread, and the household of the baker Guyart seems to have suffered no extraordinary hardship.

As Marie grew from childhood to maturity, which came early in those days to the women of Touraine, the memory of her first divine caress was never far from her. Her desire for prayer, the "sweetness and patience" which emanated from it, only increased. She began little by little to understand that delicacy of conscience which, although never degenerating into scrupulosity, made her see as infidelity the slightest irreverence, the least sign of vanity. Slowly God's plan began to unfold before her, and in her fourteenth or fifteenth year she went to her mother to tell her that she wanted to be a religious.

To Jeanne Guyart the choice of a monastery was, no doubt, a foregone conclusion, since there was at that time but one monastery for women at Tours, the Benedictine Abbey of Beaumont les Tours. As an added inducement to Marie, it was then under the government of Lady Anne Babou de la Bourdaisière, a distant cousin of Marie's mother. It was a famous monastery and an old one, dating from the twelfth century when the Seigneur d' Hervé, taking pity on the badly housed community of women whose work was to take care of poor pilgrims visiting the shrine of St. Martin,

built for them a grand convent in Beaumont outside of Tours. By the sixteenth century the convent was rampant with noble ladies. The chronicler of the conventual chapter of August, 1587, recorded complacently that of the twenty-five members of the chapter almost all "belonged to the nobility of Touraine and their names can be found in the armorial of the province."⁶

Although Beaumont remained singularly free from the blemish of scandal, and had a reputation for such conventual virtues as kindness to the plague-stricken and hospitality to the poor, nevertheless, it could not have escaped untouched from the general monastic degradation consequent upon the Wars of Religion. The scandals which made Montmartre proverbial were undoubtedly exaggerated, but while there is no reason to feel that poisoning one's abbess was a commonly recurring practice in the monasteries of the day, yet there were but few cloisters which remained loyal to monastic observance. Silence, rules of cloister, the common table had grown "inexpedient" and had, little by little, given way before the insidious pleas of the "exigencies of the time." To restore the exact observance and primitive fervor was the work of those incredible geniuses, the reforming abbesses: Marie de Beauvillier of Montmartre, Laurence de Budos of Caen, Marguerite d'Arbouze of Val de Grace, Françoise de la Châtre of Faremoutier.⁷

The reform which had begun at Montmartre at the turn of the century took long years before it caught hold in the provinces, and Beaumont in the first quarter of the century was undoubtedly following the lazy, well-bred course which had become the accepted pattern of religious life. If Madame Guyart felt that the choice of a monastery for her daughter was an obvious one, God did not. We have no surer proof of Marie's sensitivity to divine inspirations than her inexplicable conduct at this time. At the thought of the well-kept gardens of Beaumont, with its long cloisters and elegant chapel, no peace came to her heart. Before her mother's questions—Would she go to the Benedictines? Did she wish to speak to her cousin, the Abbess Anne?—Marie hesitated. Her mother, watching this child who desired the ideal but balked at the specific reality of the cloister, felt she was too young to be sure. If this desire were really from God she would bring it

up again, the mother thought. Marie said nothing, and the conversation ended.

In Marie's heart the affair was far from ended. It would have been so easy to take the nearest way, but the Spirit who guided her so deftly was leading her to another end. Why she had hesitated she scarcely knew, for she felt with an unerring certitude that she was destined to belong to God. Writing later to Claude of this first abortive effort to enter religious life, she explained:

When I proposed my desire to my mother she did not contradict me but rather seemed to approve, saying that if Madame de Beaumont was aware of this desire she might be able to receive me into her community. But there the affair ended, and I, being a little timid, dared not insist after having broached my desires. I have since thought that perhaps my mother did not consider me suitable, seeing me very gay and affable—qualities which she may have thought incompatible with religious life.

For two or three years her life continued unchanged. She never again mentioned the subject of her vocation to her parents. This reticence came less from shyness than from that characteristic directness which felt that all that could be said on the matter had already been said. To Madame Guyart, however, this silence betokened something far different: it proved that her daughter's desire had been no more than a childish dream, a romantic vision of black dress and linen coif in some candlelit chapel, a youthful fervor which tends to see the ideal only in the unknown. Many girls dreamed of the cloister, thought her mother, but only until a suitable marriage was proposed to them.

And when her parents proposed to her a "suitable marriage," Marie accepted. She later explained to Claude that her acceptance was due, certainly, to no attraction for marriage, but simply because she felt an obligation to obey her parents in everything:

... I assure you that if I had had any spiritual direction, I would never have consented, but I was entirely deprived of this and was actually completely ignorant of the whole purpose of directors and direction. I let myself be led by my parents like a blind person.

Her suggested fiancé was Claude Martin, a family friend, no doubt, a personable young man with a reputable business—in

short, a good catch. In that age there was nothing unusual in a marriage arranged so peremptorily, for marriages in the seventeenth century were generally matters for parental decision in which the element of the heart played a negligible part. Her mother, who knew her secret desire, remained silent; her father expressed his wish that she would give her consent, and Marie, grown used to listening to the will of the Spirit within her, knew in some unaccountable way that for some unaccountable reason she was to say "yes." Yet in spite of her free and generous acceptance of this new design in her life, the dream of total consecration to God was never entirely erased. Claude has salvaged from this period a portion of conversation between Marie and her mother which throws light upon Claude's vocation as well as Marie's. Although the wording is undoubtedly embroidered, the thought seems substantially valid:

Since, Mother, the matter is already settled and since my father is determined on it, I feel that I should obey his will and yours; but if God should bless me with a son, I promise from this moment to consecrate him to His service; and further, should He ever give me back my liberty, I promise to consecrate myself to Him.⁸

The marriage terms were settled, the marriage contract drawn up and duly signed by the parents concerned. Not long afterward, in her delicately draped wedding dress, with her hair falling loose upon her shoulders, Marie knelt in the church where she had so often prayed and answered "yes" to the irrevocable words of the marriage ceremony. The dearest aspiration of her heart was put resolutely behind her, the childhood dream of consecration was set aside, while her will was wedded more strongly than ever before to the inexplicable will of God. Albeit unwittingly, she followed, even in the paradoxical event of her marriage, the road of consecration, which in her case was to be so tortuous, so devious that faith alone could follow it to its end.⁹

At the time of her marriage, Marie was seventeen, and the years of her married life stretched before her to be lived according to the pattern her own family life had set. It must be a life lived as she had watched her mother live it—a life of industry, charity for the poor, reverence and affection for her husband, and a whole-

hearted devotion to the children who would doubtless soon be theirs.

Claude Martin, "a man possessing every desirable quality of body and soul," was by profession a silk merchant. This was a lucrative business, protected by some measure of governmental control, which liberated it from the encroachments of foreign trade. Flourishing as the business was, however, it did nothing to make Marie Martin a lady of leisure, for the household under her management consisted not only of the personal family but of the numerous workmen in the employ of her husband. If their boisterous manners and uncontrolled thirsts sometimes exhausted her patience she never admitted it, and her son assures us that she was dearly loved by them.

That efficiency which later was hers to a marked degree was even now in evidence. The perfect ordering of a large household which, Dom Claude assures us, was never in confusion sprang from a sense of interior orderliness which permitted her to accomplish miraculous amounts of work. Many years later she wrote from her Canadian convent asking the pardon of her correspondent for such a short letter, but explaining that two hundred other letters from her hand must find passage on the same vessel. The press of work either in these early years of her marriage or later never encroached upon her interior life; she attended Mass daily as before, receiving Communion as often as she was permitted, and there was in each day a time for personal prayer. This perfect harmony between action and contemplation is one of her noteworthy characteristics, foreshadowing as it does a life of deep mystical prayer fused with apostolic activity. She devoted herself completely to her vocation of wife, refusing herself the indulgence of conjuring up dreams of what might have been. Just as she had obeyed her father because in her faith she heard in his words the will of God, so now she obeyed her husband. Although not yet twenty, she had already acquired that profound wisdom which recognized that "in His will is our peace."

Church ceremonies held more and more attraction for her; "They are my life and my food," she wrote. Her childhood habit of sitting happy and motionless in the shadows of the church never left her, and now the girl, only eighteen but mistress of a household, would come in her matron's dress, with her loosely

falling kerchief, to wait in silence upon the will of God. During Lent and Advent and on feast days there were sermons for which the preacher would mount the high, ornately carved pulpit and speak to her the word of God. Tours had fine preachers in those years, and their sermons were generally well attended, quantitatively if not qualitatively. Not infrequently church manners and theater manners were two of a kind—and both bad. But to Marie none of this mattered. She was a child again, and this priest towering above her in his pulpit was speaking to her of her Father and her Father's house. In those moments the simple love and devotion of her childhood were on fire within her and she thought it "the most wonderful thing in the world to preach the word of God." For as she listened, her heart expanded within her; it was a vessel, so it seemed to her, and these words were a fiery liquid which was being poured into her until she overflowed with love. No longer did she dream, as she did when a child, of running after the priest to touch his robe or kiss his footsteps, but she was no less interiorly moved.

One day, perhaps near the feast of the Holy Name, Marie heard a sermon. When she left the church, all reality save this most Holy Name seemed shadowy to her. She walked through the streets and back to her home. There were duties to perform, and taking off her cloak she began her work, but through it all there was a music within her; this heavenly sound filled her heart, and her soul sang over and over again, "Jesus, Jesus," and was not able to stop. A presage, perhaps, of those days to come when, powerless beneath the weight of grace that was poured over her, she must ask leave of that same Jesus to go about her ordinary work.¹⁰

With her second year of marriage a new joy came to her, and she remembered the day when she had promised that if God sent her a son she would consecrate him to His service. A child was to be born to her. But with the new joy came also a new sorrow—a sorrow from which even to the end of her life she never drew the veil. Dom Claude, who speaks of it as a cross "so crushing, so rare, so new that there has never been a parallel," is undoubtedly in the throes of exaggeration. Her husband was the cause; more than that cannot be said with any certainty. Was it a rumor gathering matter as it flew from house to house that Madame Martin

was not really happy in her marriage, that she yearned instead for the life of the cloister?

If this was the rumor that reached Claude's ear at last, it takes but little imagination to realize the tenseness of the months that followed. Claude, reticent, said nothing, but watched with bitter envy this woman, his wife, who, it was rumored, had never given him her heart. Love so taunted seeks often to taunt in return, and Marie, bewildered by the sudden change, by the watchfulness so akin to distrust, was also silent, fearing only to make matters worse by bringing them to the light.

Finally the cause, whatever it was, became manifest, and Claude realized at last that it was not he but Marie who was bearing the brunt of misunderstanding. Their son years later is scarcely less reticent than his mother, but speaking of this episode, he writes:

Her love was unalterable in the trials she suffered, so that she was a source of admiration to her relatives and friends, who could not understand how she could maintain a sincere love and an inviolable union with one who had been the cause, though innocently, of her grief. He himself was astonished at it and could not see her distress without being moved to tears even while he admired her great virtue. He missed no opportunity of asking her pardon with the deepest sorrow.¹¹

Spring bore the flush of peace that year, and the Martins, secure in a love strengthened by misunderstanding, prepared for the birth of their first child. According to Dom Edmond Martène, Dom Claude's biographer, Marie spent the day before her child's birth in vigil at the ancient Benedictine monastery of Marmoutier.¹² When we recall the promise she made on the day of her marriage, it is not difficult to determine the subject of her petitions and it is not without significance that Claude, after so many futile wanderings, found his spiritual home in this same abbey of Marmoutier. On April 2, 1619, her child was born, and three days later he was taken to the parish church of St. Pierre des Corps, where he was baptized, receiving his father's name—Claude.¹³

During the summer months that followed, Marie, holding this second Claude in her arms, thought often of her promise: "If God gives me a son I will consecrate him to His service. . . ." That someday this child might dedicate his life to God was her dearest aspiration. Perhaps, as she later suggested to her son, this

was God's plan in turning her from the life of the cloister to assume the role of wife and mother. Although she could not deny that religious life had a profound attraction for her, neither could she deny that she found deep peace and happiness in her married life. She loved her husband; she loved her child; and if her hours of prayer were still dear to her, she was learning each day, as St. Catherine of Siena had learned before her, that it is the cloister of the heart that matters and for that there is no need of a monastery. She had almost forgotten that her promise to dedicate her child to the service of God had an additional clause: "Should God ever give me back my liberty, I promise to dedicate myself to Him."

Yet, but a few months after the birth of her child, she walked through the house with her liberty cold and silent beside her. Claude Martin was dead, stricken suddenly by one of those unnamed diseases so prevalent in the seventeenth century. She had heard the town crier announce the news through the street; she had directed the men as they draped the entrance to the house in the black cloth of mourning; but the reality had not yet become intelligible to her. Even as she walked in the long funeral procession with her gray widow's cape falling full around her, it was not easy to believe that she was, after less than two years of married life, a widow. Her husband's coffin was lowered into the place prepared for it, the earth spread over it, and a small wooden cross placed above it. And Marie turned homeward to where another Claude awaited her.

She was a widow. She was nineteen. She had a son but six months old. They were singularly grim assets, and before long she was to learn that there was yet more to face. The thriving business of Claude Martin, silk merchant, was far less secure than she had realized. There was a welter of unfinished business transactions, unpaid bills, and unsatisfactory ventures; yet she felt but little anxiety, for there was in her heart, as she later wrote, "a strength and courage which enabled me to bear everything." With amazing precocity she managed everything, and in the merchant shops of Tours it was remarked that Madame Martin, the lady who prayed so long in church, had, as well, a head for business. It was safe to wager that her widow's mantle would soon be changed for another wedding dress! Marie's friends and relatives had innumerable sug-

gestions to make along these lines and gave their sage advice with laudable generosity. Claude, they remarked, would be the first, surely, to want her secure and happy in another marriage. And as for her child, it would hardly be Christian to deprive him of a good foster father and a family background. Then, too, they reminded her, Marie was certainly in straitened finances. They would be only too glad to help, of course, if necessity demanded it; but with a good marriage such help would never be necessary.

Marie listened and said nothing, but as she watched the young Claude in his small wooden cradle she wondered how right they were. Wholly right, prudence would argue. What right had she to sacrifice her child to her own caprices? But here she grew strong again, for in her heart she knew that it was not a question of her own caprice but of God's will. He had given her back her liberty, and ironic as the terms of that liberty seemed to be, she, of her own act, would do nothing to imperil it further. Prudence, yes, but was there not a higher prudence which kept its eyes upon ultimate goals and made its decisions in faith? And faith did not demand understanding, only acceptance. So Marie Martin, with all her talents, her level headedness, her business acumen, acted with less reason than a child in his cradle. She put her home in order, packed her possessions, and with her son in her arms returned to her father's house.

There was an end to it. She said she would never marry again. She said she would not even carry on Claude's business. She had other plans, she remarked. She asked if she might have the top floor of the house for herself and her child—low-ceilinged gable rooms where the sun beat down in summer and where the warmth of the great stove never reached in winter. She had come home, and in a way far deeper than those who said it knew, for in the silence and the solitude she had come home to God.

Those long reaches of prayer which she had known in her childhood were hers again, and now with renewed intensity. As in childhood she had accepted this thing without question, so now she accepted it without analysis. It was the breath of life to her, and the thought of submitting it to scrutiny did not enter her mind. That these long hours of divine union should be mentioned in confession, that her prayer should be guided by a director, never occurred to her.

So it was, at least until that strange morning of the twenty-fourth of March 1620. She was still engaged in ordering her husband's tangled business, and as she walked eastward into Tours she was repeating that ejaculation which had become her ordinary prayer: "In Thee, O Lord, do I trust, let me never be confounded." Suddenly, without warning or explanation, the visible world fell away from her eyes, and to the eyes of her soul there appeared a world of spirit, so true, so terrible, so utterly real, that until the end of her life the impression was never effaced from her heart. There she stood, stock-still in that busy street, while her first great mystical experience swept over her. Here plain before her, she saw the sins of her life—each one clear, distinct, unmitigated, and so terrible in its aspect that, as she writes, "I think I would have died of fright, had the goodness of God not sustained me." As the women with their market baskets brushed past her and the workmen trudged by in their clumsy shoes, Marie saw her soul plunged in the Blood of the Son of God.

It was at once solace and new shame to see that it was for her, in the abjection of her nothingness and the willfulness of her sin, that the Precious Blood had been shed. She was at once humbled and exalted, and fumbled, as she would do so often later, to explain this experience, which to the end will defy human expression.

There is no human language to express it; but to see a God of infinite goodness and incomprehensible purity offended by a mere worm surpasses the very horror itself; more than that, to see a God made man dying to expiate sin, pouring out all His Precious Blood to appease His Father and so to reconcile sinners to Him—one cannot describe what the soul feels at this wonder. And further, to see that one is personally responsible so that if she were the only one who had sinned, the Son of God would have done for her what He had done for all—it is this that consumes and annihilates the soul.

When she came to herself, she found a new creature, so strong had this mystic action been upon her. All that she had ever thought herself to have done for God, all that had appeared to her to be love for Him was ashes beneath her feet, while within her burned a flame which left no portion of her body free from the anguish

of love. Bewildered by the strange paradox, she adds, "And what is more incomprehensible, this mercilessness seems sweet."

What happened to her exteriorly during this space she never knew, except that she found herself far from the *Chemin du Haut-Fossé* on which she had originally been walking, and was now standing opposite the newly built chapel of the Feuillant Fathers in the Rue St. Maurice. Still with God's hand upon her, she entered the church and fell upon her knees before the priest who was standing in the dim light of the nave. Before he could in his astonishment suggest a more orthodox spot, she began: "Father, I wish to make my confession." There was no need to think of numbers or circumstances, for she still writhed before the vision of this foul personal hell, and the words poured forth like torrents of lava still smoking with her shame and confusion. When she had finished, the Father, who recognized here the finger of God, answered her "most gently"—Marie mentions it carefully and in amazement that one to whom she had revealed the fullness of her sins could still find it in his heart to be kind. He told her to return to his confessional the following day, when he would give her absolution.

Here begins Marie's relationship with the Feuillants, who were to be her spiritual directors for the next twelve years. They had come to Tours but shortly before, lodging at first in the priory of St. Jean des Corps; but in 1620 they had obtained permission to build a provisional chapel not far from the Archbishop's residence.¹⁴ It was into this chapel that Marie had wandered on that incredible morning and found, as though waiting for her, Dom François de St. Bernard, who continued to be her confessor during some of the most extraordinary years of her life.

According to Marie's own language, this vision of the Precious Blood was the day of her "conversion," on which were opened to her the gates of God's mercy. Once again, as in the episode of her childhood dream, her biographers are in unison in interpreting the role and importance of this experience. Both Jamet and Renaudin speak of it as her definitive, conscious, and official entrance into the mystic way, and Dom Claude expresses without exaggeration the profound impetus which this vision gave to his mother's interior life:

By this conversion we must understand the firm resolution which she took to think no longer of the world with its cares and hopes, in order to give herself wholly to God and to live solely for His love.¹⁵

At first glance, this experience seems to be wholly antithetical to her first call—that dream of her childhood which is characterized by the tenderness of Christ and the sweetness of her reply. The keynotes of this second divine call seem to be austerity, humiliation, and profound shame. Actually, there is no contradiction, for both are the revelations of love; and Marie, who is now launched upon the mystic way, must learn experimentally that the way of the mystic is also the way of the cross.

It was in the recollection of this extraordinary grace that she passed the next year, living in a peace far deeper than any she had ever known. Her eyes had been opened, her vanities torn from her, and she realized that nothing but infinite compassion could have had mercy upon her. Of this experience, she writes:

I saw my ignorance exposed, which had made me believe that I was nearly perfect, that my actions were guiltless, and that I was very close to God. But after Our Lord opened my eyes, I saw myself as I was and acknowledged that my righteousness was nothing but iniquity.

During these months it seemed as though there were no longer choices and decisions to be made, for so powerful was the action of the Holy Spirit within her that the slightest breath was sufficient to make her act: "The Spirit who conducted me, taught me everything, and led me where He would," she commented. Her love for solitude became a passion, for it was, she realized, in solitude that God would speak to her heart. Her prayer and those heroic austerities, which here have their beginnings, produced, as she herself relates, "a hatred of self, a forgetfulness of both my own interests and those of my son." She was, as she says, "a dove hidden in its nest," and the empty ceremony of Tourangelles society became a burden too heavy to bear. When, at last, she put away her widow's cape, it was only to assume clothes even more unattractive; her gowns were less full than fashion demanded, less ornamented with the delicate lace and heavy ribbons so popular in her day.

In those days prayer was her life, and she stood unshaken before the persistence, the entreaties, the reproaches of her friends. Her own family were loudest in the cries. All the old arguments were brought forth with renewed vigor, chief among them her obligations to her child. It was the unnaturalness of her life which appalled them most, and to this Marie had no answer. It was not a natural life, she did not deny it; and for it there was no natural explanation. "It is what God wants," was her only explanation; and, since this scarcely allowed of argument, there was a shrug of the shoulders, a futile gesture of the hands, and a disapproving silence from those who knew so little of the folly of the cross.

Marie returned unvanquished to her room. This she knew, now more clearly than ever before, that condemn her as they would, she would never leave this solitude where God waited for her.

CHAPTER 2

Her resolution to solitude, taken so determinedly, lasted, however, little more than a year, for toward the end of 1621 the neighbors of St. Pierre des Corps watched Marie Martin take her eighteen-months-old son and leave her father's house.¹ Her sister Claude needed help with her housework and had asked Marie to come to live with her. The thought of making another change, of being caught up once more in the management of a large household at first seemed unbearable; but, as she hesitated, she became convinced that God again desired the inexplicable, and in the end she consented. To her friends this new decision seemed merely another and even more foolish caprice, and her lack of explanation only served to make their judgments more severe. It was not reticence on Marie's part that kept her motives from them. When she said, "It is what God wills," she had said all that she knew, for long ago she had stopped asking why. Beneath the weariness of change and disappointment, there was an alacrity born of love and a secret smile for the whispered comments which already swam about her head. But when, for the last time, she closed the door of her room behind her, she wondered if all her life was to be an endless process of closing doors upon what she loved.

Marie was not ignorant of what awaited her in her sister's home, for such a home had once been hers. Claude Guyart had, according to Tourangelle standards, made a successful marriage. Her husband, Paul Buisson, was a promising merchant, and in the ten years since their marriage, business had flourished almost beyond his control. The growing household, consisting, as was the custom, of Buisson's workmen as well as the immediate family, was more than Madame Buisson could manage even with servants to help her.

Claude knew Marie well enough to see that, despite all this

folly of prayer and seclusion, her sister had an abundance of domestic virtues. Her management of affairs after her husband's death would have made many a man envious, and even in her hours of solitude in her attic rooms she was never idle. There was always her wicker workbasket on the floor beside her, and the delicate embroidery which she turned out was flawless. She had a way with people, too, for even as a child, when they would go with their mother to visit the sick, the most obstinate of them had never resented services from Marie's hands. Perhaps even with these hordes of burly workmen who clumped through the house and fought at their meals, perhaps even with them her way would still hold good. It was at least worth trying, thought Claude; and with motives that were distinctly variegated, she offered her sister a place in her home.

It is difficult to look kindly on the Buissons, who seemed to take such deliberate advantage of Marie's charity; yet, although Marie herself admits that she suffered much while living with them, she lets no word of censure fall upon either Claude or her husband. The greatest fault of the Buissons was, undoubtedly, insensitivity rather than malice; in the last analysis, it was not the Buissons but God who "exploited" Marie.

Dom Claude, writing many years later, avers that this was the largest household in the whole of Touraine—and perhaps the busiest as well. As Marie sat at supper that first night, listening to the talk of houses and carting, boats and prices, and heard the rough laughter and rougher jokes of the carters and dockmen, she was dumb before the inexplicable mystery that here, in the midst of all that she hated and scorned, she could be happy. God wanted it; that was enough. Here in this boredom and fatigue she found she could give herself to God more completely than ever before, with that peculiar vitality which pain and contradiction bring. A sense of anticipation and expectancy rushed through her as cleanly as a breath of wind. Now God must give her Himself more fully than ever before, because now, in an unfathomable way, He had taken from her every other solace.

As Claude watched Marie and saw her gaiety bright as ever, she relaxed considerably. Marie would take hold of things just as she had known she would. There were rooms to clean and cooking to do, the workmen to be served, and an occasional sick man to look

after; work, no different from that in any Tourangelle household, even though here things were handled on a larger scale. Claude had less reason for anxiety than she knew, for Marie had set her face not to a task but to a vision. Less than two years before, motionless on a street in Tours, she had seen Marie Guyart as she appeared in the sight of God. Although the shock was soon over, the realization that what she had seen was true was an ineffaceable memory. Whatever others might say of her no longer mattered, for she had seen what she was in God's sight and she could not fail to be true to her vision. She was convinced of two things: whatever kindness and love she received were wholly undeserved; whatever kindness and love she could bestow were never to be omitted. Here in the Buisson household her heart expanded as she saw the opportunities stretching in endless procession before her; for here she could be the servant of the servants.

She was an indefatigable worker in this cause that she had espoused and was overwhelmed with gratitude toward Claude and Paul Buisson, who had so provided for her. Her own work was done flawlessly, and the servants often came to their duties only to find that she had been there before them. Yet through it all, God kept her blinded to her own virtue, for He was eager to have her attain that humility which would prepare her for those graces He had in store for her. Years later she wrote:

I considered it a singular kindness for them to keep me in their household, thinking myself indebted to them because of my uselessness; I felt obliged to do whatever I could for them and to be most obedient in every way.

Even in these infelicitous surroundings, her prayer and mortification were never diminished, for beneath her plain dress were the hair shirt and chain for which Dom François had given his permission, and the sweetness of God's presence was the air she breathed. While she stood beside the great fire in the kitchen, lifting the huge iron pots that would test the strength of a far stronger woman and often being burned by the crude kitchen implements, she found what she does not hesitate to call a certain gaiety; for, as she writes, "my heart was being consumed by another fire."

The business of serving the workmen, sitting with them as they

ate, discussing their problems with them, was not new to her, since even in her own home it had been part of her task. Now, however, it was a work with new significance, a work made dear to her by a spirit of love that became daily more universal and more intense. It is difficult to describe the workmen's reaction to her. Sometimes it seemed as though they considered her almost one of them, and yet in other ways they manifested a respect which embarrassed her. In the midst of heated talk an oath would rip across the table to be followed by a silence heavy with confusion. Such talk was good enough for the dock, but one did not speak so in front of Madame. But Madame's cheeks burnt with shame that these dockers who would curse so freely before God choked with apologies before her who was worthy of so little respect.

If there were favorites among them, it was those who needed her most, either in body or soul; and there were many who needed her sorely in both. There was much sickness among them, for theirs was work that was both hard and dirty. The boats that docked at Tours often carried disease—smallpox, the plague, and, more prevalent though less dangerous, all sorts of skin infections which needed careful and constant dressing. At one time or another, Marie nursed all of them, having, as she later writes, "four or five of them on my hands at once." Somehow they realized, most of them at least, in that intuitive way in which souls vibrate to goodness, that she looked for no reward, that she felt no repugnance, and thought of no condescension. Whatever she was, whatever her reasons, she belonged to them by a wholehearted act of choice. She loved them. It was in her hands as she dressed their sores, in her eyes filled with compassion, in all her manner which said that for herself there was nothing: she had given everything away.

When she spoke to them of the sermons she had heard, of what God expected of them, of what would be their reward, they listened with the attention of an audience which knows that it is listening to realities. If a fellow showed less interest than courtesy demanded, his neighbors promptly improved his manners by a subtle but heavy kick. They were poor men, rough, with but little learning; they ate too much, drank too much, were not always seen at Sunday church; they admitted it all and were, at least

intermittently, sorry. It was hard for them to believe that God was their Father, that He loved them and wanted them with Him forever; but when Madame spoke, these things were truths to them, as real as their aching muscles which had felt the strain of bales and carts through the long day. Sometimes among them would appear a Huguenot, a poor fellow treated not overgraciously and often eyed askance as a son of the devil. To Marie, such feeling was the sheerest bigotry, and none received more of her attention than the "dissenters" among the workmen.²

She went from task to task, with the servants themselves often giving her orders. There were complaints that she was doing too much for the sick workmen, that the food should not be cooked by a woman who had been dressing infectious sores, that she did not act in a way befitting her position. To be condemned for what seems best and most self-sacrificing is the most bruising of humiliations, but to Marie it brought only more joy. The vision of Christ in His Passion was always before her, and as she looked upon Him, condemned unjustly, humiliated beyond conception, she rejoiced in her own abasement. She longed for union with Him, and the path of union stretched clear before her—to become as far as she could what He had become.

For over a year the Passion alone was her meditation, but a short time after her entrance into her sister's household she received a new gift of prayer. She was given, as she describes:

. . . a union with Our Lord Jesus Christ touching His Sacred Mysteries from His birth to His death . . . I experienced in this gift of prayer that this Divine Saviour was the Way, the Truth, and the Life . . . I entered into Him, and by Him and in Him were disclosed to me these divine mysteries by which I live, and my soul was fed.

Thus she received a further initiation into the mystic way. With this grace her spirituality became increasingly Christocentric, a salient feature of much of the mystic theology of her day. In addition, this deepened union with Christ brought with it a new passivity in which the soul recognized that it was to be less the doer than the receiver.

But this God who led her in these paths, although easily pleased, was never satisfied; and as her prayer increased in intensity she

knelt wholly abashed before the inexpressible sanctity of God. In His light her actions were not only indescribably small and worthless, but so petty, so halfhearted, so lacking in love for Him who had so loved her. The very word "purity" had a magnetism for her, for by it she seemed to have expressed all that God was for her at this period of her life. This realization of divine sanctity caused in her a profound reverence. Such reverence was the most distinctive characteristic of her prayer, as on her knees before this infinite purity she addressed Him most frequently as her Lord, her Master, her Sovereign. God's answer to her forms one of the loveliest episodes of her spiritual life. One day as she prayed all in reverence, she felt Christ speaking in her soul:

You call Me your great God, your Master, your Lord, and you say well, for so I am. But I am also Charity. Love is My name, and it is thus that I wish you henceforth to address Me. Men give Me many names, but there is none which pleases me more or better expresses what I am for them than this.

Her heart ran in the way of this command, scarcely daring to believe that, despite the abyss that separated them, God would have her call Him by no other name than "Love." From then on He was for her, to the very end of her life, always "*mon cher Amour*," my dear Love.

So strong now had her union with God become that she performed her duties without ever losing contact with Him. In the face of His exactions, she commented simply, "His love is so jealous that he is pitiless in His demand that every impurity be destroyed and that the heart be immaculate, since it is the scene of His divine action." Although this purity of heart is a feature of her spirituality which she retained throughout her life, it reached its peak in the spring of 1622 when she saw the purity of God as a great sea before her:

Our Lord continually united me more and more closely with Himself. One day while praying before the Blessed Sacrament (it was about two years after my conversion) I found myself in great interior recollection, and being entirely out of myself I saw that God was as a great sea of purity, and as the sea will not suffer any impurity but casts it out of itself, so this great sea of purity which is God desires only what is pure, rejecting everything which is akin to death and impurity. He

taught me by this that He wanted from me a great purity of heart; this gave me such a delicate conscience that the least atom of imperfection seemed to me to be an impurity and a barrier between this God of purity and my soul. I desired nothing but to be led into this great sea. . . . This impression was so powerful that I could do nothing but repeat, "O Purity, Purity, hide me in Yourself, O great sea of Purity."

This image of God as a sea is one that appears frequently in her writings. In a letter written to her director sometime after this vision, she explains: "This Infinite Majesty was like a vast sea which breaking its bounds covered me, inundated me, and enveloped me completely."

Although receiving fresh graces from God daily, and encompassed by mystical experiences, she made no mention of her prayer to her director, Dom François. As He had been in her childhood, so now, the Holy Spirit was her only guide, and she felt no need for any other.³ Those days when she would find nothing but darkness within and without, when temptation would wrestle with grace until she scarcely knew one from the other, were not yet upon her, and now even in suffering all was very clear. She was overwhelmed by grace, and although her days were spent in the most arduous labor, she was never drawn away from the sight of God.

At this time there was sent to Tours a priest who was to be one of the greatest influences in her life. This was Dom Raymond de St. Bernard, who was sent to replace Dom François and who was to be for many years the superior of the Feuillant monastery in Tours. He is praised on all sides as one of the most capable directors of his day—a man prudent, learned, experienced. Dom Claude, who knew him personally, commended him as "one of the most skillful directors of his day."⁴ What he meant to Marie is indicated when, many years later, she met Father Jerome Lalement and, attempting to give him the highest praise, remarked, "He is another Dom Raymond."

She, knowing nothing of spiritual direction, was not aware of her need for it, and her first meeting with Dom Raymond must have been full of strange surprises. He was never satisfied with halfway measures in anything, and his questions probed depths in her which she herself had never known existed. He wished, as

she says, to get at the bottom of her soul, and nothing was left untouched. She was questioned on her manner of life, her penances, her prayer, and without further ado he told her that from now on he would regulate everything. Dom Raymond had about him the inexorableness of God and, recognizing the worth of the soul before him, he spared her nothing. "I had to render him an account of everything that happened," Marie explained, adding, "I had to tell him my slightest faults, even uncharitable thoughts about him."

Their first encounter left Marie with a grateful heart, however, for he had solved a problem which had come to weigh heavily upon her. Sometime before she had discovered a book in which was explained—all too rigidly—the Ignatian method of meditation. Points, preludes, colloquies, all were carefully outlined, and the author ended his work with the consoling caution that if one did not follow this method but tried to do otherwise, he was putting himself in imminent danger of being fooled by the devil. Marie was frightened, for her prayer did not in the least correspond to what was here set forth. No sooner did she place herself before the Blessed Sacrament or even before the crucifix in her room than she was lost to everything except the thought of God. Was this then not God but the devil? Apparently, since the author had implied as much, and he would know far more of such things than she. She would meditate, then, as the book suggested; and thus the superhuman struggle began. She prepared a subject, dividing it according to the stipulated outlines; she found a composition of place so that her imagination would not be led to distracting images, and she who could be absorbed in God in less space than it took to finish an Ave Maria sat bolt upright, clenching her hands in a grim, determined effort to fight her battle against the devil. The time for prayer, usually so short, grew to endless lengths, as she repulsed with all the strength of her body the waves of grace which swept over her. In those moments when she felt the presence of God seep through her like light she could struggle no more. Easy enough to say this was the devil when she sat in her room reading her book, but when the thing was actually upon her and in her it did not matter what her mind reasoned, for there was a deeper instinct that she could not deny that whispered, "This is God." Dom Raymond agreed. This other prayer was

not for her; she was to go where the Spirit led her and forget everything else.⁵

With this advice she was happier, more certain than ever before. Although this temptation to doubt would repeat itself with weary insistence throughout much of her life, she would be armed against it with the fortitude of obedience. No matter how strong it became she was invincible, because Dom Raymond had approved her way. Her interior recollection, already so constant, was deepened with a new realization of Divine Love. She was wholly occupied by love, and her soul, powerless before this great God, could whisper only, "If you were not truly Love, You would never have done such wonderful things to my soul." That despoilment and forgetfulness of self which she had experienced in some measure in the solitude of her father's house was augmented daily here in this household where the only solitude she was ever free to enjoy was wholly interior. So complete was her oblation that even the sacrifice of solitude itself had become dear to her, and in return Jesus filled her with His own spirit. Of this period she wrote, "I could conceive nothing good, nor beautiful, nor desirable but to possess the Spirit of Jesus Christ. . . . All the powers of my soul neither wished nor desired anything but to be in Jesus, and to follow Him in His life and in His spirit."

At the same time, this Jesus who so filled her with Himself kept her in a state of complete abasement. The sanctity of God was ever before her; and as she saw that great abyss of purity, her own soul, by contrast, seemed fraught with infidelities. She was abashed at the realization of what purity that soul must possess which is united to God, and wondered at her own presumptuous longing that would be satisfied with nothing less than being lost in Him. God seemed only to confirm these thoughts, for He reproached her with uncompromising severity for her imperfections. These reproaches pained and humiliated her more than any exterior cross, and seeing how far she still was from the mount of perfection, she resolved to neglect no means that would lead her to her goal.

Her favorite work was that which kept her at the feet of others, and those who humiliated her most received the greatest portion of her love. Dom Claude, commenting on her longing for humiliation and suffering, remarks, "In her brother-in-law's house she found all that would satisfy her in abundance."⁶ During these first

years in the Buisson household she did her best to keep her natural gifts hidden, for she feared that she might be deprived of the menial work she loved and given a better position than she deserved if her capabilities were observed. So avid did she become to have always the meanest, the poorest, the most inconvenient for herself that one day she confessed to Dom Raymond that she feared she was becoming "attached" to her "lowliness."

At this period, despite the grace with which she was filled, there spread in her soul a restlessness, difficult to explain, more difficult to satisfy. She did not understand it; she knew only that it drew her constantly toward God and that her soul lived in expectation. Although God seemed to communicate Himself to her with rare liberality, she could not be satisfied. Her soul tended constantly toward a more intense communication, a communication that was in some way different from any that she had hitherto experienced.⁷ "I was filled and encompassed with this heavenly sweetness," she writes, "and although I felt so surrendered to God, my heart yearned to be united to Him in a wholly different fashion."

This was a pain more penetrating than any she had ever felt and was made more acute by her helplessness. "When will this union be accomplished?" she cried in her loneliness to God; but heaven was silent. Suffer as she did, she suffered far less, however, than other mystics who passed through the terrors of this state of transition with no one to guide them. To Dom Raymond she told everything, as she had promised, and in his experience he understood the state of her soul. It would have been wholly anomalous had he consoled her, but his very strength was consolation, and even in the brusqueness of his treatment, she was secure that her soul was in the hands of God.

How long she remained in this restless anxiety one cannot say, but one day it ended as quickly as it had begun. As Marie prayed, clinging to a desire for she knew not what, begging for what she did not understand, she heard God speak to her interiorly. The words spoken to her were the words of the Prophet Osee: "I will espouse thee to Me in faith; I will espouse thee to Me forever." The mystery was ended and the vision was clear before her: that toward which her soul was tending with the persistent willfulness of a compass was espousals with the Son of God.

With these words came an entire change in her interior dispositions; her occupation was no longer with the humanity of Christ but with His Divinity. Whatever she had known of prayer before seemed nothing compared with what she now experienced. In trying to express it she writes:

I no longer felt the Spirit of God stealing gently through me; now as soon as I prepared for my actual prayer, I had to go to some hidden place and sit down or lean against something, for otherwise I would have fallen in front of everyone. I felt myself drawn powerfully and instantaneously without having the time or the ability to make any interior or exterior act. I seemed to be wholly lost in God, who withdrew all my power to act. This is a suffering of love which we must endure as He pleases, for we cannot extricate ourselves. It seems to the soul that she has swooned before her Beloved, made so weak by love that she cannot speak. Thus I remained for an hour, or perhaps two; toward the end I felt a great tranquillity of soul and I was amazed when I found myself once more in my usual state of intimacy with Our Lord, which, however, had become stronger and more powerful.

Even outside her hours for meditation this great recollection overpowered her. Often she began her rosary and was not able to continue it, for the first few words were sufficient to fill her with an indescribable spirit. The same was true when she said the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and even her spiritual reading often went unfinished.

This state of prayer affected her body as well, and although she practiced the most rigorous penances, she admitted that none of these weakened her half so much as this intense recollection. God no longer came to her sweetly, in a calm peace, but brusquely, almost rudely, vanquishing her liberty, seizing her soul as a captive to His power.⁸ But through it all her exterior activity was not diminished. Her penances continued with her director's approval, and her works of charity, now more works of love than ever before, were, if anything, increased, for she found in them solace and relief from the flame that consumed her.

Her soul veered toward God with an action that never ceased, and love was her only passion. She walked always in God's presence, and yet, as she was so careful to say, in a way that was

wholly spiritual—"in the understanding and the will," for the imagination played no part in this. At some times more than others, she was aware of Jesus very near her, at her side, accompanying her in her duties. This presence and company were so sweet, she writes, "that I cannot express it as it really was."

Longing as she was for the completion of the promised espousals, she realized more fully each day the utter purity, selflessness, complete abandonment which alone could prepare a soul for this union. As early as 1621 she had made a vow of chastity with the approval of Dom François; but this was only an initial step, and in her search for the most perfect means of abandonment, she turned to the further vows of obedience and poverty. The latter would change her life but little, since even now there was but little that she could call her own. She was never in want; yet she lived in complete dependence upon her brother-in-law, who furnished her with what was necessary. But a vow of obedience was glorious in her eyes. Herein was all virtue; to obey, to be humbled, to have no will of one's own, to have no rights, no choice, no liberty, to be bound in all things great and small to one who held the place of God. How can we abandon ourselves to Divine Providence? she later writes. There is but one way: to follow blindly without hesitation the orders of our director. It is this message that she says she would wish, if she could, "to cry aloud," that all who seek may know that there is but one way to God, the path of obedience.

She presented herself to Dom Raymond begging his permission to take such a vow. He consented, with the understanding that if ever she entered religion this vow would no longer bind. So Marie took her vow—a vow made ingenious by the ingenuity of love, for it was a vow of two parts: it pertained first to Dom Raymond, but further it pertained to Paul and Claude Buisson, whom she also promised to obey, and this, of course, without their knowledge. Although she writes of Dom Raymond, "My confessor took great care to mortify me, letting no opportunity pass," this part of her obedience was but child's play compared to the other. The whims, the caprices, the thoughtless requests and half-uttered suggestions of the Buissons became for Marie the word of God. Her own fine practical sense was set aside as she obeyed the often impractical advice of her masters. What it was to endure a hundred inconveniences which a word from her could easily have

remedied, to know that imperfect work could be done more perfectly by a single suggestion, is a secret she will not violate except for a single terse, uncolored sentence which in its very understatement draws the veil from her sacrifice: "God alone knows what I suffered in this obedience."

The most rigid religious obedience could scarcely surpass the renunciation which her vow imposed. Even with Dom Raymond, try her as he would, she was always aware that whatever he commanded was done for her spiritual welfare and that, although he would seldom console her with the admission, he knew that she was striving constantly toward perfection. With the Buissons, the situation was far different. Understanding nothing of her interior life, knowing nothing of her vow, they uttered their suggestions with the thoughtlessness of the casual word. If they noticed that on her part they were accepted with a peculiar alacrity, this fact was attributed no doubt to that unaccountable folly which seemed always to dog the footsteps of Marie.

Her reticence does not permit her to say much of this period, but her son has salvaged one instance—an episode which describes Marie so perfectly that there is no need for further episodes to complete the picture. Attending Mass in these days was not always easy; but Marie managed, going as early as possible, slipping quietly down the side streets, and being home usually before the household had missed her. One morning as she knelt in the Feuillant chapel, she heard the clump of heavy boots beside her. It was a workman from Paul Buisson come to say that his master wished to see her as soon as possible. Marie looked toward the altar; it lacked but a few minutes till the distribution of Holy Communion. One long look of hunger and desire and then, fastening her cloak resolutely about her, Marie Guyart followed the heavy-booted messenger down the silent nave.

"It is in obedience that God is to be found," she cried, and held her soul in readiness for that moment of union which He had promised.

CHAPTER 3

If she had thought that her vows would alleviate her strange restlessness, she now found that this was not to be. With every act of these vows she found her mind filled with thoughts of religious life, and struggle as she would to reject them they returned with wearying persistence. With her usual forthrightness, Marie laid all before Dom Raymond; to her surprise, he did not reject her desire as an impossible folly but reflected that, since God had given into her care a child scarcely out of his cradle, it would seem that He would wish to keep her, for a while at least, in her present position. Yet, who could say? It was entirely possible that in His own good time God would give her this grace. At his words her heart expanded with hope, and she determined to live henceforth with "my heart in the cloister and my body in the world."

Thus confirmed in her desires, she set about preparing her soul more carefully still; she betook herself to the Gospels, searching "for those great and infinite treasures" which are hidden there, above all, for examples of the pre-eminent virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience. It was from this source that she began to experience the glory of poverty of spirit, of which she wrote:

Oh my God, all words and even ideas must be silenced, for my mind cannot grasp nor my tongue express what was revealed to me concerning this glorious poverty of spirit and of the two virtues [purity and humility] which follow in its wake, for they are links which cannot be separated.

The lesson which she had begun to learn so long ago, that in comparison with the goods of the spirit the best of material things are as nothing, now became more meaningful than ever. Day by day she felt herself increasingly detached from the things of the

world, with that clearness of vision which would give away all and count it as nothing. Of this grace she later wrote:

Everything seemed worthless to me, and more and more I felt detached from the things of the world. My poverty was dearer to me than the state of the greatest men and it seemed that in possessing God I possessed more than all creation. Had anyone asked me: What do you desire? I would have answered, "Nothing, for God is my all."

In the six years that were to pass before she was free to offer herself for religious life, the overwhelming importance of this interior poverty grew constantly upon her. In a letter to Dom Raymond, impossible to date exactly but written no doubt shortly anterior to her entrance into the Ursulines, this same detachment is the keynote. As with Teresa and "Little Brother John," and later with Margaret Mary and Father de la Colombière, the penitent here turned director, and to her confessor she wrote:

I believe that Our Lord wishes to lead you by the way of great detachment, for the spirit which is purified of everything, not delaying at His gifts, ascends directly to God without stopping at anything less than that for which it has been created—in this consists perfect nudity of spirit. One day when I was closely united to His Divine Majesty, offering Him, I believe, some souls who had been recommended to my prayers, this interior word was spoken to me: "Bring me empty vessels." I realized that this meant souls empty of everything—who, like St. Paul, run without stopping in order to attain the goal. And I understood that it is in these souls God wills to dwell, taking pleasure in intimacy with them. . . . Thus he wishes the souls that He calls to a very high perfection to be one—that is despoiled of everything, even of affection for His gifts, so that attached to Him alone they may be one with Him.

Her rigid despoilment of self did not go unrewarded, for one day as she brought her "empty vessel" to prayer, she heard Jesus say to her interiorly, *Pax huic domui*, and with these words she was suddenly and unaccountably filled with a peace so sweet and so profound that she dared not try to describe it. This was not a transitory gift, but one which was to remain with her throughout her life. Later she writes: "This word had such an effect upon me that I have never since lost this interior peace for a minute . . .

although eight years have already passed since this experience." This gift was one that touched the very center of her soul, that mysterious dwelling place which is accessible to God alone and which can remain in tranquillity despite the turmoil which may go on without its walls. Although it was no proof against temptations, which soon were to tear through her soul like a whirlwind, yet even in the midst of them, shunted as she was from despair to hope and back again to despair, she bore witness that at the summit of her soul stood the citadel of God, invincibly established in peace.

With these new heights of spiritual poverty her soul cried, not for consolations, but for suffering. Here begins that period of her life in which corporal penance becomes a salient feature. "I counted that day lost in which there was not some suffering," she wrote, as she increased her mortifications far past the limits of prudence. But Dom Raymond, seeing here the imprint of the Spirit of God, gave his consent to her austerities and God Himself upheld her. Marie's absolute docility in this as in everything else adds further proof to the authenticity of her mystic life. "She brings to these practices nothing arrogant or rigid," comments Renaudin, adding that, extreme as they were, they were not marked by eccentricity.¹

Hair shirts and disciplines and spiked chains had long been her custom, but now these things could no longer satisfy that insatiable longing for suffering which grew daily within her. "If hitherto I had begun to mortify myself, now all that seemed like nothing to me," she writes, in prologue to that harrowing description of austerities which she divulges only in obedience to her director.

I found that sleeping on bare boards was much too comfortable, so I covered them with a haircloth and slept on that. The discipline made of nettles which I used in the summer was so painful that after using three or four handfuls each time it seemed to me that I was plunged in a boiling cauldron. This pain generally lasted for three days and then I began again. I never stopped using a discipline of chains, but that was nothing compared to the pain of the nettles. I ate wormwood with my food, and between meals I held it for a long time in my mouth to taste its bitterness more fully. . . . I used a hair shirt so

frequently that it became a habit. . . . During the period that I slept on boards covered with haircloth my flesh was so sorely wounded on the side where I lay that it became insensible. . . . This mortification is the most painful that I have ever performed, for the hardness of the wood and the weight of my body drove the bristles into my skin so that I could only half sleep, always feeling the pricking pain. In short, I took pleasure in denying nature everything it loved.

All these penances, "so strongly inspired," seemed in no way to injure her health; rather they gave her a lightness of body as well as soul—that *gaieté* and *allegresse* which made her so lovable to those with whom she lived. She herself best explained the results of these austerities when she said: "My interior recollection increased in the measure that I mortified myself." With this interior recollection grew apace her love and faith in the Blessed Sacrament. Dom Claude comments well, "her body, fatigued and weakened by her austerities, received new strength miraculously from her Communions."² She lived in a period when daily Communion was a thing almost unorthodox, for according to the decrees of the Council of Trent, monthly Communion was considered frequent for the laity at least, and semimonthly Communion was approved by only a few theologians. The Jesuits, however, wished weekly Communion to be the practice of the faithful at large, and on this point the Feuillants and St. Francis de Sales agreed. Marie had read the Bishop of Geneva's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, and it had given her courage to beg for the privilege of daily Communion. Dom Raymond, seeing the force of her desire, acceded, and she was granted permission to communicate daily. "And," she writes, "despite the heavy work where I was and the business affairs in which I was engaged, I found the means to do so."

With each Communion her faith increased until it seemed to her incomprehensible that there were those who had difficulty in accepting the reality of this sacrament. When she read of having to subject one's understanding, holding it captive, that one might accept in faith what could not be understood, she was puzzled. "My understanding knows all without being held captive," she writes, and then cries, "O my God, I think that I no longer have faith; I know beyond all that it teaches me! With so much light,

how is it that I have not run to Love? This is the divine food from whence I draw the strength to go on in all my trials and weariness."

So it was with her always. Undoubtedly the deprivation of daily Communion was one of the greatest sacrifices she had to make on entering religion. Less than a year before her entrance, she wrote to Dom Raymond, who was at that time in Paris: "Every time I have approached Holy Communion, I have felt so strongly the love of Our Lord in this sacrament that I cannot tell you what has happened to my heart."

One of her greatest trials during this period was to be constantly in the company of those for whom Divine Love was no more than a preacher's phrase to be dusted off and given to the congregation on Sundays and feast days. Even while she turned from them with an instinctive aversion, the love in her heart darted forth to embrace them while she turned to God, promising to love Him for all those who, in their ignorance, did not.

If I could have embraced all these hearts and wills in deed as well as in desire they would soon have loved Him. . . . My affection enveloped them all—all their hearts and all the love which they might have had, and I offered all of this to Our Lord, embracing Him in a way which is known only to Him who has permitted me such liberty.

Bodies as well as souls were included in her effectual charity, and with that rare capacity for work which was not the least of her gifts, she found time to visit the sick and the poor even during those years when the burden of Paul Buisson's business fell to her lot. In her poverty Marie had nothing of her own, and it seemed as though the list of poor depending on her assistance increased daily. In desperation she gave away everything she could get from her brother-in-law's household—later confessing her impetuosity in this matter as a "great imperfection." When resources seemed to be at their limit, it was to the Providence of God that she turned, and that Providence never failed her.

Our Lord urged me continually to beg favors of Him. I told Him everything, and when I saw anyone who was in need, I said, "My Love, this person needs that, please give it to him." He heard me, and I immediately found whatever was needful

for my poor. One day I was filled with fear, not daring to present the needs of some people. He spoke to me interiorly, saying, "Ask, ask without fear." This gave me such confidence that I urged Him boldly, and He heard my plea.

Through it all, with the day filled from end to end, with never a moment to herself, with silence an impossibility, her union with God was undisturbed. She had cried to God, "Take care of me then, O my Love, for you wish that I have care of so many things," and God had heard the cry.

Her house was in order; her world was at peace. God had promised that at a time that He willed, their espousals would be completed, and meanwhile He had said, "Peace to this house." She had entered, so it seemed, into the land of promise, for so firmly was her soul established in Divine Love that she wondered if any power on earth were strong enough to move it. Suddenly, without warning, without reason, this dwelling which had seemed to be invincible shook about her and above her, and Marie was swept into a whirlwind of temptation of which there seemed no ending.

Everything which formerly had made her joyous now began to fill her with weariness and loathing. The devil, the world, her own self-love all conspired to the attack. What a fool she was! All this mortification, and for what? Thousands of Christians loved God and kept His commandments without going to such foolish excess. Was it not pride that led her to act as though she were holier than others? The thought of those austerities which but a week before had been for her a source of joy now made her writhe in rebellion. Each night she turned to the hard boards which for so long a time had been her bed, and revolt swept over her in waves; each night there was the same grim battle, but each night when finally she fell asleep it was without having permitted herself any alleviation.

In the morning she rose, unrested, unconsolated, to face another day. While the streets were still gray with the first dull light of dawn, she walked in a chill of body and heart toward the chapel where God had always awaited her. But now it was no longer love that ran toward Love. Had she ever loved? she wondered, as the struggle to live another day for God alone descended upon

her in physical oppression. She looked ahead to the long hours of the day and found nothing to sustain her. "It seems to me," she writes, "that I was like those poor beggars who go trembling from door to door." All those acts of charity which formerly had been solace to the love burning within her were now dull weights to pull her already overburdened heart further toward despair. "On whatever side I turned, everything caused me pain," she writes—most of all, perhaps, those hours for prayer, once guarded so jealously. How long could she persevere thus? she wondered. Was this not a sign that her way was not pleasing to God; that she should have married instead, and so provided for the welfare of her son according to the normal order? Always before, when she was not sure of her path, she had had recourse to Dom Raymond, and under the directions of obedience had found peace; but now such a course filled her soul with repugnance. To confess all this—the weariness, the temptations, the near-despair! To find words to express it and then to drag this squalor out of the depths of her heart and spread it before the eyes of him who for a single fault would humble her to the ground! To be humiliated, scorned, despised; all that she had prayed for so ardently, she now turned from in sickness of soul. It was, however, but an instinctive turning, and did not carry her will with it, for whatever she felt, that remained immovably fixed in God.

As she struggled to force herself to go to Dom Raymond and open her heart to him, another temptation, more insidious than all the others, came upon her: she felt that whatever she had revealed to her director in the past was all a piece of deception. Graces in prayer, hunger for austerities, wishing always to be the least of all—these were the lies and subterfuges which she had used to appear holy in his eyes. What use of saying more when she could not trust her own thoughts? But the conviction that in obedience she would find God's will drove her forward, and on her knees before Dom Raymond, she told her miserable story. As he listened, he saw far beneath the surface of her words and discerned the heroic proportions of the trial which God had let fall upon her. For once there were no harsh words; he confirmed her in the path she was traveling, explaining that all this was but the devil's way to make her give up all that

was most precious. Despite his kindness, however, her soul remained in the hands of God where no human solace could reach it. She rose from her knees unconsolated, seemingly unstrengthened, and in sheer weariness of heart abandoned herself once more to God. With this act of total abandonment to His mercy came the grace to go on in the way that had been traced for her; although it seemed that not a breath of moral strength was left in her, nevertheless, she stood firm until the end. Later she wrote of this period:

I cannot describe the thoughts which tormented my mind, exhausted as it was by a profound interior darkness concerning God and the perfection to which I aspired. Although in such a state my spiritual exercises gave me no comfort, I never gave them up. I had to force myself, especially to take the discipline and perform my other acts of penance. This pain caused me much shame before God, and in His presence I accused myself of laxity. But wishing to master myself, I began, and having once begun I found it difficult to stop. I thought that I owed this fidelity to God and that I would be a hypocrite if I did otherwise, or if I omitted any of my exercises, despite the suffering I endured from this interior desolation.

This trial was sent, as she was later given to understand, to purify her still further, in order that she might be a worthy vessel for divine favors. When it had accomplished its purpose it disappeared as suddenly and unaccountably as it had come. Marie was but twenty-five during this first storm of interior trials; they would return to her often in the years to come, with greater intensity and in longer duration, but the later trials would never again bear the violence of shock. Terrible as they would be, she would at least have an understanding of their place in her mystical journey.

Now once again God's sunshine was about her, and the old familiarity of love was resumed. The trial had done its work well, for she was saturated with the realization of her own nothingness, and, despite the familiarity which God permitted her, she was often crushed before this Infinite Majesty. In a letter written at this time (undoubtedly to Dom Raymond) she explains: "My interior occupation is to look upon the Infinite Being of God. And as He is all and I am nothing, my heart

is so content with this All, that my greatest pleasure is to see that I am nothing.”³

In this new light she saw how far she was from that profound humility so necessary for divine union. She saw her own powerlessness more clearly than ever before, realizing the profundity of those words, “We can do nothing as of ourselves.” She found pride skulking in unexpected quarters: in the way she appropriated credit to herself for those qualities both interior and exterior which were God’s undeserved gifts to her; in her desire for esteem and the secret complacence which she felt. God in His own time willed to free her from these subtle temptations, for one day as she opened a book to the words of the psalm, *Nisi dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eum*, she was suddenly liberated from the blindness of her pride.

Then I found myself so useless and so powerless to do any good, and on the other hand, so fit for every evil that I recognized that I was truly nothing. I cannot express this sufficiently. This recollection never left me, so that from that time on I have never been able to attribute any good except to God, the sole author of all good. For although hitherto I had referred all to Him, it was, nevertheless, not in the full realization of my nothingness. This was like a torch which shone from all sides and made me see continually my own powerlessness and my strict obligation to attribute everything to God.

The knowledge of her imperfections, formerly unrecognized, filled her with shame, and at the thought of confessing them all her heart quailed. For a moment she wavered. After all, to confess mortal sins was quite sufficient and all that was demanded by the sacrament; there would be nothing wrong in leaving these imperfections untold. But at this evasion of truth she was overcome with a confusion far greater than that caused by the prospect of confession. Was she to add hypocrisy to the already sufficient list of her sins? Before her shame abated, she set off to find Dom Raymond; and for the second time in her life she dispensed with the formality of the confessional. “On my knees before him, I told him all without dissimulation,” she writes. “It seemed to me that my spirit was under his feet; I did not even dare raise my eyes to look at him,” adding with revealing

terseness, "God knows how he treated me, letting nothing go unpunished."

Whatever punishment he meted out to her, it was not sufficient for her ardor, for she returned to him carrying a list of all her sins, "from the age of reason to the present," sins of "thought, word, deed, omitting no circumstance," and with her name, written in her tall, graceful script, appended at the bottom. She had come "begging him to do me the kindness of putting them on the door of the church so that all who entered would see my wickedness and how I had been so wretched as to offend the Divine Goodness." Taking the list, Dom Raymond said he would think it over; but Marie waited in vain for it to appear on the great door of the Feuillant church.

Never had the fire of divine love burned so strongly within her, and it seemed that she could find no means of assuaging it. Mortification and acts of charity alone gave her relief, "although," she adds with her amusing directness, "I do not do it for that reason." Even these acts were not enough, for there was no escape from the martyrdom of love to which she was predestined. Only God himself could assuage these pains, and this He did in that grace which was the first whisper of Marie's singular devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which preceded the great revelations of Paray-le-Monial by over half a century. One day, sometime in 1625—possibly in the beginning of the year—Our Lord took her heart and enclosed it within His own. Writing of this a few years later, she recalled:

Very often I used to wake up praying, and one night I saw that this Divine Spouse held two hearts in his hand, His own and mine. He put one into the other so skillfully that there appeared to be only one, yet, nevertheless, I saw the union of the two. While effecting this union He said to me, "Look, this is how hearts are united. . . ." Returning to myself, I spent several days of union with Our Lord, which so penetrated my heart that, humanly speaking, I would have fainted at every moment, had He not sustained me.

Now, with her heart firmly established in His, she was Love's slave more than ever before; yet this "slavery," as she calls it, was full of sweetness for her, and her heart was light. One day, meditating on the words of the psalm used in the Mass of

the Ascension, "He led captivity captive," she saw the relation of these words to her own soul and wrote:

When the Sacred Word Incarnate will call me to Himself, detaching me from this body, He will lead captivity captive, because since He has taken my heart and done me the honor of enclosing it in His own, it has always been a captive under the laws of His love; and when He draws me from this life, I will still be His captive. Should I not then love my blessed slavery, since it is my glory with my beloved Jesus not only in time but even for eternity?

Love was now her only occupation, and she offered herself ceaselessly to this God of Love that He might do with her what He would. To Dom Raymond, she wrote: "Our Lord has given me such a powerful attraction that it seems to me that I hold my heart in my hands offering it to Him in sacrifice." Prayer was once again what it had been before her first terrible trial, except that her passivity before the divine action had increased. A specific subject for meditation was impossible, for, as she explains, "In less than an *Ava Maria* I have forgotten all, and without being aware of it, I find myself in my ordinary familiarity with God."

To her practical mind this grace had its disadvantages, since it denied her the capacity of meditating on the Passion of the suffering Christ. One day during the Lent of 1625, as she thought of this apparent deprivation, God proved to her conclusively that He could fill her in a moment with light to penetrate deep into the most profound of His mysteries. This "revelation" concerned the mystery of the Incarnation and marks one of the highest mystical graces in all her interior life.

From time to time, even when I was not expecting it, Our Lord enlightened me concerning the mystery of the Incarnation and on the union of the Word with the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. . . . Especially once during Lent, I could do nothing else except rest in the sight of the splendors and perfection of His blessed soul and the loving affections of His heart. There were no words between us, only a simple, loving glance. It has always been thus ever since Our Lord put a stop to the discursive element of my understanding. He has revealed Himself to me by a mere glance, with great purity and simplicity, and without the senses being involved in any way.⁴

Christ became for her now more than ever "the Incarnate Word." Her devotion to the Incarnation was essentially to the mystery itself, seeing this Divine Utterance take upon Himself human flesh while still remaining in the bosom of the Father. It is the Divinity upon which her gaze is concentrated, and yet with such a tenderness of love that she cannot cease praising the Father who had given her His Son, or that Son who of His own act had given Himself to her. It is this emphasis on Christ as the Divine Word of the Trinity which lends an aura of reverence to her spiritual physiognomy. It is the majesty of God which is so impressed upon her spirit, and more and more she finds her soul, so fraught with divinity, borne by Christ, the Incarnate Word, to the home of the Eternal Three.⁵

It is this increasing tendency to find rest only in the Trinity which is preparing her soul, all unwitting as she is, for the peak of mystic revelation in which she will see—in a manner wholly spiritual—the very heart of the divine activity proceeding without cessation in the bosom of the Trinity. The mystic graces of this period of Marie's life occur with astonishing rapidity, for the revelation of the Incarnation is separated from that of the Trinity by only a very few months. The former occurred in Lent of 1625, and the latter on May 19 of the same year.⁶

On Pentecost Monday of 1625, Marie set out to hear Mass in the Feuillant church where, as she remarks, God had given her so many signal graces. She walked along the same streets, doubtless, which on March 24, 1620, had been witness to her vision of the Precious Blood—called forever after her "conversion." Five years had passed; Claude was now six and Marie herself twenty-five. What those five years had meant to her she was too close to them to suspect; they were years in which all had been given away, and yet with each renunciation she had been saturated with a love which left place for nothing else. They had brought her that paradoxical happiness, deeper than any other, of joy in sacrifice. But they had brought as well a sacrifice so devoid of joy that it seemed that the human heart must freeze beneath the coldness of it. She had learned to know her own soul, to understand the strange ways of God; yet most of all, she had learned the lesson of abandonment when the ways of God could not be understood.

She knelt in her usual place in the church so recently built for the Feuillant Fathers and waited for Mass to begin. Her eyes were traveling over the curiously carved angels which formed the base of the massive candlesticks, when suddenly she was wrenched from this world of reality and borne into an indescribable realm of the spirit.

. . . in a moment my eyes were closed and my spirit was raised and absorbed in the sight of the most holy and august Trinity in a manner that I cannot express. In this moment all the powers of my soul were arrested, while this sacred mystery was impressed upon them. It was an impression without form or image but clearer and more intelligible than any light, and I was convinced at first sight that my soul was in truth. In a moment, I was shown the divine intercourse which the Three Divine Persons have together; the love of the Father which in contemplating itself brings forth His Son in an eternal generation. My soul was penetrated with this truth in an indescribable way which left me speechless, engulfed in an abyss of light. Then I saw the mutual love of Father and Son produce the Holy Spirit in a reciprocal outpouring of love, but without any element of confusion. . . . Seeing the distinctions, I came to recognize the unity of essence among the Divine Persons, and although I have had to use a great many words to speak of this Most Holy Trinity, in a moment, without the passage of time, I recognized the unity, the distinctions and the internal and external operations.

So she wrote in 1634 in an attempt to recapture for her son one of the most glorious moments of her life. The vision had lasted during several Masses, but she herself had lost track of all time. "I remember only that I came to myself from time to time," she writes, "but I was immediately absorbed again in Him. When it was over, I found myself on my knees, my hands at my waist; I regained my consciousness with great difficulty for my senses were completely alienated." There was little more she could find to say of this overwhelming experience; but Dom Claude, with his insatiable curiosity about his mother's mystic life, was still not satisfied, and in the fall of 1671, just six months before her death, Marie found time for a further account in what may have been her last letter to her son.⁷

Since you want me to give you some clarification of what I have told you in my writings concerning the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, I will tell you then how it happened. I had never been instructed in this great and adorable mystery, and even if I had read over and over some human exposition it would never have been able to make such an impression on me as I then received and which has remained with me ever since. This came as a sudden impression which kept me motionless on my knees and during which I saw in a moment what can be said or written only by allowing a space of time or a successive interval to pass from one thing to another. At this period I was habitually concerned with the sacred mysteries of the Incarnate Word. Five hours would pass while I remained on my knees unwearied and with no thought of myself, the love of this Divine Saviour holding me close and as though transformed into Himself.

Under the impulse of which we are speaking, I forgot everything, my spirit being absorbed in this divine mystery and all the powers of my soul arrested in order to receive the impression of the most august Trinity, without any form or figure of sense experience. . . . In a word, the soul was immersed in this great ocean where she saw and understood inexplicable things. Although it requires time to speak of it, I saw in an instant the mystery of the eternal generation; the Father begetting the Son, and Father and Son producing the Holy Spirit without intermingling or confusion. . . .

Notice please, that these wonderful things have never been forgotten and that they are still as fresh for me as when they happened. As to the terms employed, they are not thought out and used only to signify what I see in my mind. They are always inferior to the thing itself, but I cannot find others which express it any better.⁸

With a gulf of almost fifty years between, the woman of seventy-two describes the incredible experience of the girl of twenty-five. If she stumbles in her narration it is not because the vision has been dimmed, but because, as she herself so often maintained, "there is no human language to describe it." Nowhere does she draw the line more clearly between the mystic and the theologian. She does not profess to explain, only to describe, and with that terminology which is not the studied language of the theologian but the analogous expression of the

mystic.⁹ She is never satisfied with the stock-in-trade expressions of spiritual writers to express what is essential, individual; consequently, her terminology is uniquely her own.

When she emerged from this deep and immediate contact with the Triune God, she must have wondered if this were not the promised grace of espousals; but even as the thought rose within her a divine wisdom warned her that her preparations were not yet complete, that the work of purgation was not yet consummated. There was more to come—more love, more glory, and more, much more of the cross.

CHAPTER 4

Marie had long since learned that the grace of spiritual marriage could not be bargained for, but that a great price would be exacted for it. She was not surprised then, when, following the vision of the Trinity, she found her soul again plunged into desolation. Although the memory of her first great interior trials was fresh in her mind, yet this did little to alleviate these new and more vehement temptations. It was, indeed, part of the suffering that she struggle blindly, uncomprehendingly through those lonely days which seemed to have neither purpose nor conclusion. It was not until much later that, understanding the place of this temptation in her mystical ascension, she would write, ". . . these touches, so delicate but so crucifying, are a purgation . . . to make the soul worthy."¹

Once again she felt her soul descend into that mysterious abyss from which only the arms of God could draw her; once again all human and divine consolation was deprived her and she trembled at the thought of her own presumption in believing that she had been the recipient of unusual graces. This it was, this feeling of having been deceived, doubtless through her own fault, in the way of her spiritual life which furnished the greatest element of suffering in those trials which followed hard upon the heels of her first vision of the Trinity. "I was abandoned and totally deprived of all the graces which I had received," she writes, adding, "even the remembrance of them redoubled my pains, for I was tempted and even persuaded to believe that they were not true graces but no more than a loss of time in which I had amused myself." For this grief there was no solace, and even the direction of Dom Raymond did no more than make her shrink into herself like some poor wounded creature who

has suffered so much that even the gentlest touch becomes an unendurable agony.

Trembling with fear even for her salvation, she had no need to turn to God, for the thought of God never left her. He was in the air she breathed, not for comfort but for further crucifixion, and she did not hesitate to write, "what increased my sorrow the most was the thought of God, for I never lost sight of Him, and my greatest pain was that it seemed to me that I did not love Him."

Through it all, that grace of interior peace which had been given on that memorable day when the words *Pax huic domui* had been said to her was not destroyed. It was, however, an imperceptible peace which gave to the sensible part of her soul no alleviation; for, as she describes it, "I saw, but at a great distance, this peace withdrawn to the depths of my soul which surrendered to all that God ordained; yet I was hardly able to perceive this acquiescence." Dom Claude, in admiration of what his mother suffered, comments: "These are the hidden and crucifying ways which . . . God used to purify her, and, in fact, it is unbelievable to what a degree of purity He raised her by these secret trials."²

One ray of intellectual consolation did come to her, for as she recalled the graces she believed herself to have received, she could find nothing in them which was in any way contrary to the doctrines of faith. Even more, her spiritual reading confirmed what she had already been taught interiorly, and in the sermons which she heard she often found a re-echoing of what God had hitherto spoken in her soul.

Despite these trials, which could not but have reacted on her physically, her exterior manner remained unchanged. That iron control of her emotions which was such a characteristic note of her spirituality was never broken, and, apparently, no one in the Buisson household was aware of the interior storm which swept over her for months at a time without abatement. What the Buissons did become aware of, however, was that remarkable *talent pour négoce*, that business sense with which Marie was singularly endowed. Although for the five years between 1621 and 1626 she had set herself to do the most menial tasks as though she were capable of no others, her ability at organization soon

shone through, as from the first she feared it would. Whatever natural attraction she may have felt for taking charge of things and seeing that they ran efficiently had always been stifled beneath the supernatural impulse to be no more than the "servant of the servants." Marie's vow of obedience would seem to have been sufficient to stem her initiative, but it could not stem her selflessness nor her ardor for work; and Paul Buisson, besieged with more responsibilities than he could manage, came to realize that Marie's capabilities had not yet been plumbed. Monsieur Buisson, while retaining his title of "Commissioner for the transportation of merchandise," had also accepted the responsibilities of an officer of the artillery and various other minor duties. By 1626 his business had outgrown his management, and he suggested that Marie take charge of his affairs at Tours. This arrangement left him free for necessary travel and, also, as Dom Jamet comments ironically, free for vacations at his country house.³

Marie passes over in silence this change of duties. It seemed that with each successive liberation of her soul, God willed to bind her body more securely to the world. Her interior trials were still at their height when this further burden was laid to her back. So worn out had she become, even physically, from the ceaseless combat going on within her that Dom Raymond had retrenched her penances, fearing that she could not survive that double agony of soul and body. God, however, was more pitiless than her director, for in place of the corporal penances which Dom Raymond had forbidden her, came this other, a penance, in truth, which demanded both body and mind and in which there could be no alleviation. Her vow of obedience left her with no choice, and when her brother-in-law put the question, a question which was no more than form, so accustomed had they become to her obedience, there was nothing for it but to answer, yes.

A door had once again closed behind her, as now, more solitary than ever before, she took up her stand on the wharves of the Loire, where the wind whipped her long cloak about her and the salty language of the carters whirled around her head. In place of helping the servants and caring for the sick, there was merchandise to be counted and checked, contracts to be

drawn up, and merchants, too shrewd to let a woman get the best of the bargain, to be treated on their own terms. Long after the workmen had finished their day's work, Marie waited in the little shack which Paul Buisson had built on the wharf for a boat late in docking or to see that a carter had finished with his last load. The care of the horses fell to her charge as well (some sixty, we are told), and when the work ended late it was she who slid off the heavy harnesses and rubbed down those shaggy sides still wet with the sweat of hauling their heavy loads.

Of this unique period of her life, Renaudin writes:

There on the quay, in the midst of her packing cases, we see her living, living as we live, amidst the encumbrances and the business of the world. Let us ignore her austerities, her sublime flights; let us see only this woman as her sister, her employees, her equals saw her. . . . Let us discover with amazement that prodigious stroke of her wings by which she raises herself above our poor realities yet without leaving them.⁴

This work was to fill a double purpose, not only detaching her still further from her own will and inclinations, but also, as Dom Claude points out, acting as a practical preparation for her future missionary apostolate. She herself later recognizes this element as she writes:

This was my novitiate, from which I did not emerge perfect but, through the mercy of God, at least in a state to bear the turmoil and labor of Canada.

Almost a year had passed since her vision of the Trinity, and now sometime during the Holy Week of 1626, between April 5 and 11, she was again favored with a mystic grace. Although she herself places this in a much less important sphere than that of the vision of the Precious Blood and of the Trinity, it was, nevertheless, efficacious in bringing forth her soul from the abyss in which it had lain; in addition, it increased her sense of the majesty and purity of God, and, consequently, deepened her own desire for purity of soul. Of this experience, she writes:

One Holy Week Our Lord gave me new lights concerning His divine attributes. My mind was wholly engaged with the unity of God, and in this unity there was shown to me His grandeur,

His infinity, His eternity, without beginning or end. I was lost in admiration crying, "O Goodness, Immensity, Eternity." Whatever one can say is nothing compared to the reality, for we must sink to the very depths to adore this great God. While I remained in this God of Majesty I understood more than I can tell or write. All the perfections that we speak of are as nothing; all our words and names must be thrown to the winds and we must be satisfied in saying, "God, God."

I was filled with this experience which transformed me completely for I saw that everything belongs to this God from Whom all beauty and goodness are derived. In this knowledge, I exclaimed, "Oh more than good, more than beautiful, more than adorable. You are God and a great God." This word "God" was engraved in my soul so that I could grasp nothing but that. After this impelling attraction my soul was taken up with each of the divine perfections in turn, consumed in acts of adoration and admiration, annihilated and abandoned before this great All.⁵

Although interiorly certain that these graces must have their source in God, her distrust of her own judgment once again made her "fear to be mistaken," until she had been reassured by her director, who, she writes, "wished that I would let myself be led to God."

This realization of the divine attributes was not a transient grace, for in its effects it lasted almost a year. In prayer and out, despite the ceaseless occupation of business which converged upon her from all sides, Marie was absorbed by the infinitude of God. Her soul, penetrated with a sense of divinity, was lost in adoration even while she was engaged in the endless round of business. Unknown to her, the last preparation for her espousals was being completed. The reverence with which she was penetrated was the final disposition required of her soul before God would bestow that singular grace toward which her soul had yearned for so long a time.

Since she herself tells us that she continued in the spiritual state produced by the knowledge of the divine attributes for almost a year, we can assume that the spiritual marriage which was consummated with the second vision of the Trinity took place in the spring of 1627, probably near Pentecost of that year. The external details of time and place are here, as in so many

other places in her life, irritatingly lacking, except for two sentences included in the account given by the *Relation of 1654*. She writes:

I have always noticed that when His Divine Majesty was about to give me some unusual grace, besides the remote preparations, I felt as the time drew near that He was disposing me in a special way, that is, by a foretaste like the very peace of Paradise. . . . During this I would say to Him: "What do You want of me, My Love?" It was then that I experienced His action and, usually, a change in my state.

She then continues with the only external details which she bothers to record:

. . . One morning while at prayer God absorbed my spirit in Himself by an extraordinarily powerful attraction. I do not know in what position my body remained.

This account given in the *Second Relation* is of peculiar interest. Marie, with the wisdom of maturity and experience and with the length of twenty-seven years separating her from the actual occurrence, pinpoints with her usual succinctness the primary difference between this vision and that first vision of the Trinity which had occurred in the spring of 1625.

The first time the impression that I received affected principally my understanding, and, as I have said before, it seemed that His Divine Majesty gave me this grace only to instruct and dispose me for what would follow. But this time, although my understanding was enlightened even more than before, it was my will which was in the ascendancy, for this grace was concerned only with love, and by love my soul found its all in the intimate possession of a God of love.⁶

It is, however, in the full description given in the *Relation of 1633* that we can glimpse the freshness and indescribable wonder of her soul in the face of this consummate grace which had been so long in preparation.

Our Lord again raised me and in a most loving way to a knowledge of the Trinity, whose grandeur was revealed to me in the unity of the Three Divine Persons, but in a way very different from that by which I had previously been taught.

For the first time it was more a question of admiration rather than of love or possession, but this time love predominated. I saw the internal communication of the Three Persons as I had previously, but I was more fully instructed concerning the eternal generation of the Word. How inexpressible this is: that the Father in contemplating Himself should produce another Self which is His image and His word; that this Word is equal to the Father in power, in grandeur and in majesty; and that the Father and the Son, by their mutual love, produce the Spirit of Love who is equal to them in all things. . . . I forgot the Father and the Holy Spirit and lost myself in the Divine Word, who caressed my soul as though it belonged wholly to Him. He showed me that He was all mine and I all His through this powerful union which held me captive. Even more, it seemed that He was given to me to be my own, to enjoy at my leisure, and, if I dare say so, that all His goods were now our mutual possession. The soul, seeing itself so rich in the enjoyment of this infinite Word, wished above all to be His captive. She wanted nothing for herself that He might have all; she wished to be nothing that He might be all, loving nothing but to be despoiled and empty in contemplating the object of her love. This is a very labyrinth of love where the soul becomes intoxicated and bewitched. She hardly knows that she exists, for she is lost in this ocean of love which engulfs His chosen ones.

When I say that the Word held my soul captive, I mean that He held it so tightly in his grasp that I could do nothing. From time to time a ray of light reminded me of the Father and the Holy Spirit, as if they were reproaching me lovingly for my forgetfulness. Then I made acts of adoration, submission, and love; but soon, without perceiving it, I returned to the embrace of the Word, where I became lost as before. But although I felt the action of the Word in me, yet I never left the unity which is the essence of the Trinity. It was then that I knew experimentally that the Word is truly the Spouse of the soul. All of this is so profound that nothing we can say even approaches the reality, and this makes me rejoice in the majesty of God, who is also so great that we can never speak of Him as we should. All this made me understand the mysteries hidden in the Gospel—in *principio erat Verbum*—finding no terms more fitting to express what can be said of God and the generation of the Word than those which the Evangelists use.

I have never experienced a greater grace than this and I do not think anyone could receive anything greater in this life. For whatever is said serves only to diminish the worth of the thing itself. I cannot think of this without feeling my heart stir anew, and the remembrance of it is always with me. This phrase, "Eternal Word," is my continual nourishment and the atmosphere of my soul.

With the conclusion of the ecstasy she had become the spouse of the Word—*le Verbe Eternel*. No longer would her spiritual life be characterized by that *tendance*, that turning of the soul toward what it but vaguely comprehended; for at last she possessed what she had so long desired.⁷ It was an indescribable state which followed, for she had entered into so close a union with God that, as she expressed it, she had found "an interior solitude which surpassed all that I had hitherto experienced." Nothing but her own impassioned words—often written, as she later explains, to give relief to the love which flooded her heart in torrents—can express what she experienced in the months that followed her espousals.

All these wonders which were constantly before me inflamed my soul with such ardent love that I was unmindful of God's majesty. I did not actually forget it, but henceforth I saw it only as love. I mean that of all the divine perfections love holds first place, for this love is God himself. I was drawn so powerfully by this motive that I felt like a prisoner, and, in truth, I can say that I was like a poor fool who scarcely understands what he says. There are no words so delightful as those which filled my heart with the violence of love. . . . When going to prayer I trembled, saying, "Let us find a solitude, my Love, where I may embrace You as I desire. Let my soul rest in You so that it may exist only in You, lost forever in this union of love." When once I was actually at prayer, I felt myself seized by love, held so strongly that I was no longer myself except that from time to time I could murmur some words of love. However, far from giving me my liberty this merely served to strengthen the union in which He held me.

To Dom Raymond, with whom she is scrupulously careful to exaggerate nothing, she says in a letter written at this period:

My soul belongs to Love and Love to my soul; and if I dare express myself thus, all our possessions are in common, so that there is no longer any distinction between "mine" and "His." . . . And although my soul is rich in His possessions she wants everything to be His, keeping nothing for herself. She desires only that she be nothing and that He be everything, finding in this her happiness. She loves nothing so much as to be despoiled and emptied that she may behold the fullness of her Beloved.

As when once before the fire of love consumed her, so now she finds her only solace in acts of charity and mortification. These she redoubled, finding time for the poor of the city and the sick among her own workmen despite the Buissons' business, which she still managed. She had not far to look, moreover, to find those who needed her care, for between 1626 and 1628 Tours was once more swept with plague. It had begun in August of 1626 and, despite precautions, it continued through the winter months. With each act of charity her love was augmented, and, as she expresses it, "He continued and redoubled His caresses."

I hid myself lest I be discovered, and since the excess of my love burned in my soul like a fire which made it impossible to breathe, I talked to Him in order to release this fire, saying: "O my Love, I can bear no more; let me rest a little, for my weakness cannot withstand your violence." Or else, "Take my life, for Your love makes me suffer more than a soul imprisoned in a mortal body can endure." It seemed to me that He was pleased by what I said, for after all it was His own spirit which made me speak as I did.

Whatever took her from this profound recollection was a martyrdom for her, yet she never asked to be released from the management of Paul Buisson's business. Sometimes as she sat listening to the terms of a business transaction her head ached intolerably from the violence of her efforts to restrain the Spirit of Love which drew her to a deeper interior union. So strongly was she impelled that, fearful lest she might neglect her duties, she begged God to grant her a little respite, saying to Him:

"I beg of You, let me plan what I must do for my neighbor, then I will caress You." Then He would let me think and I would dispatch all the business that He constantly permitted to fall into my hands.

So surrendered was she to this God, whose name He had told her was Love, that sleep was often impossible for her; but Marie with amusing practicality begged leave for at least a few hours of respite for, as she points out, "I needed this rest." Even when sleep did come she describes it as "a half-sleep, for I kept hearing these words in the depths of my soul, 'O my God' or some other aspiration."

There were times, however, when God remained adamant before her practicality, and feeling herself grow powerless before the encroachments of Divinity she had to excuse herself from the people with whom she was talking and seek the solitude of her room. It is of one of these experiences that she writes about to Dom Raymond sometime before the end of 1628.

One evening I felt strongly urged to withdraw; finally I was forced to do so and at once I was so powerfully transported by love that I was beside myself with suffering, powerless in an interior embrace. It seemed that my most pure Spouse delighted in overwhelming me with even greater favors and in adding new fire to the ardor that already consumed me. Through the very suffering I endured, He made me utter all that a loving audacity could devise. . . . So clearly did He manifest Himself to me and so powerfully was I consumed in Him by His redoubled caresses that my soul longed to break the bonds which held her to this corruptible nature of which she is more terrified than of hell itself because of its malice. But even while I made these loving entreaties, love itself charged me to wish for neither life nor death but to submit in everything to the will of Him who is all. Thus I offered to endure life even till the Day of Judgment if by this He would be more glorified.

At times she was plunged into a divine light which was so powerful that she was forced to cry out, "O my great God, I cannot bear seeing You so," adding, "This attraction was so powerful that if it had lasted any longer, I think it would have freed my soul, which would never again have returned to its prison."

One day while, as she puts it, "rendering an account" of her soul to Dom Raymond, she was seized by an interior force and her surprised confessor saw his penitent suddenly rise from her knees and seat herself in the nearest chair. An "inexplicable joy"

swept over her and she was unable to continue her recital. Renaudin notes with delight the "habitual *sang-froid*" of this woman who even before an imminent ecstasy never appeared eccentric. Knowing that if she remained longer on her knees she would fall, she had the remarkably good sense to sit down.⁸ Her absolute sanity even in the midst of mystic phenomena is charmingly refreshing, for that morbidity which shadowed so many of even the true mystics of her age never touched Marie.

With each divine favor she became increasingly aware of the inadequacy of human language, and it was only obedience which could compel her to that self-analysis necessary to express the graces which she was experiencing. Again and again, having tried desperately to comply with the demands of her director, she adds:

I prefer to be silent rather than to speak more about it, for I say nothing which approaches the reality, and besides I feel too insufficient to describe so sublime a thing. Actually, these favors should be felt and experienced rather than told or written about. . . . I mortify myself greatly to write this, for I cannot speak of my manner of prayer nor the way in which God conducts me without revealing what I would wish to be hidden in the secret of my heart. . . . It is such a delicate thing in the soul, that without seeing or hearing or tasting she understands; she knows and comprehends God and whatever His Divine Majesty wishes her to learn in a wonderful way and with inexpressible certitude. He himself is the master of the soul which He leads by this way, ruling and conducting her by knowledge and love, manifesting Himself and uniting Himself to her, hiding nothing of Himself but rather making her, even in this life, a real part of Himself by an inexpressible knowledge and enjoyment, which they alone share. In a word, it can be said that the heart and soul is a paradise where there are no secrets between the Lover and His beloved.

Her desire for Holy Communion, always so strong, had increased immeasurably in the months following her spiritual marriage; for, since she wished for nothing but union with "the Eternal Word" her desires found their fullest fruition in this physical contact with the Word become Incarnate. Dom Raymond had never retrenched her privilege of daily Communion,

and as once it had been her only bulwark against temptation, so now it became the source of her greatest joy.

I do not know how to express the power and sweetness of my union with Our Lord, especially in Holy Communion. As it was ordinarily after this that I went to attend to my brother's business, neither the noises of the streets, nor my transactions with the merchants, nor all the cares with which I was charged could draw me from that interior union which I had with the Divinity. By means of this sacrament of love, I felt myself filled with the unity of God in the very depths of my soul.

This gave me a continual hunger to communicate unceasingly, if that were possible, because I realized that it is there that we truly enjoy God. Sometimes five or six hours after having communicated, even though I had been attending to many very distracting affairs in the meantime and continually engaged in unavoidable conversation, I still felt this interior union so strongly that I had to do violence to myself to take my meals. Being with people who spoke constantly of business or trivial things, I could not pay attention to them. Sometimes my brother-in-law (perhaps to amuse himself or for some other reason) would ask my opinion of what had been said, and then I was most ashamed for I could give no answer. Thus I had to be careful and pay particular attention, deliberately distracting myself for the love of God, for otherwise I would have been annoying to the people I was with. . . . But amidst all this nothing interrupted my divine union, and the close intimacy that I enjoyed with Our Lord lasted always.

Dom Raymond, despite his severity, had no doubts concerning the validity of Marie's interior life. During both her trials and consolations he had done all that he could (albeit rigorously) to strengthen her to persevere in her extraordinary way. Perhaps it was he who, feeling that she might be more assured were she to have confirmation from another source, suggested that she consult Dom Eustache de St. Paul, then Visitor-General of the Feuillants. He was a man fully capable of advising a soul advanced in mystic ways, for besides his sound theological training he had a wealth of experience behind him. He had been a doctor at the Sorbonne when in 1605 he entered the Feuillant monastery in Paris. It was he who had helped to establish the

Feuillantine convent in that city, as well as the first French Carmel under the direction of Madame Acarie. Although Dom Eustache visited Tours several times in his official capacity, Marie never mentions meeting him personally. She did, however, at the suggestion of her director, send him a full account of her spiritual life. The answer which reached her was at once encouraging and authoritative: "I have seen," wrote the Visitor-General, "the graces and lights which your heavenly Spouse has communicated to you and I approve them in so far as I can."

How Marie lived in the midst of a large household without attracting attention by her mortifications if not by her ecstasies is difficult to explain. She herself, writing to her son many years later, is amazed at her own indifference to the reactions she might easily have provoked. It was not that she did not care whether people noticed her unusual conduct, but rather that the thought that anyone might notice her never entered her head. But sometimes at night, fearing that the sound of her discipline might be heard in the house, she crept down the narrow stairs and in the dark (she feared to carry a candle lest she might be seen) made her way to the stable or to a small cave which she had found nearby. That she could not continue such a course indefinitely without being seen did not occur to her. "I was blind to all," she writes, "provided that I found some place to hide; that was all that was necessary." One day her brother-in-law teased her in a way which made her suspect that he knew of her penances, but strangely enough he never brought up the subject again. Twice a servant, entering her room without knocking, saw her hair shirt and the boards she used for her bed; but again nothing was said. Thus her terrible penances continued, and weary as she was from the long days at the docks, she permitted herself no alleviation. Love must be satisfied, and the demands of love were insatiable.

In her attempts to find a word which would characterize the state of her soul at this period, she hesitates: it was joy but it was also pain, since, do what she would, she could not love enough. Finally, she says it was a mixture of "love and love" in which the soul can be satisfied with nothing less than a union of love.

This union grows ever stronger and this God of love must be the possessor of everything. The soul cannot write or read or say any prayers. The spirit is stripped of words so that nothing may hinder this intimate exchange of love, for it seems that even love is jealous and wills that every moment be consecrated to it. The soul feels lost in Him who possesses her, and it is impossible to imagine anything like this weakness and this wonderful self-abandonment.

It is this period of her life which Dom Claude calls "the martyrdom of love." "There is nothing sweeter, nothing more delightful than divine love," he writes, "but also there is nothing more severe . . . nothing more inexorable."⁹ Many pages of Marie's account written for her son are taken up with a description of the effects of the spiritual marriage in her soul. Aware that to the uninitiated her language would seem to verge on hyperbole, and fearful lest Claude should think her recital colored by excessive emotion, she warns him:

You will perhaps think that I exaggerate, and I admit that I do not have the proper words to explain myself. There is no human language which can express the excessive mercies of so great and good a God in my behalf. . . . Yet whatever I have said of these contacts of spirit with spirit, of being lost in the divine abyss, of the most intimate, personal contacts, I always realized that I was only a nothing on whom the All was pleased to pour His mercy because He is no respecter of persons. I have always seen . . . the nothingness of the creature and have felt very happy to be nothing so that this great God might be all. . . . It was one of the songs I used to sing to Him: ". . . It is my glory that You be all and that I be nothing. May You be blessed, O my Love." These sentiments of my lowliness sometimes made me fear, seeing a disposition involving two such opposite things. One day as I spoke with my Divine Spouse, He said to me interiorly: "It is My will that You glorify Me and sing My praises as do the blessed in heaven." This answer reassured me.

It was undoubtedly during this same year that she poured forth her own canticle of canticles—passages which follow each other with turbulence rather than continuity and which Dom Claude with singular ineptness has entitled "*Elévations et Exclamations*." There is about them a divine vehemence which

saves them forever from charges of sentimentality or monotony despite the unwearrying persistence with which the word "love" is repeated.

Ah my All, what do I want of You? I want love from You and nothing but love. . . . No my Love, You are not fire nor water nor any of the things we say of You. You are what You are in Your glorious eternity; You are; it is Your essence and Your name. You are life, divine life, living life, unifying life. You are all beatitude; You are unity, adorable, ineffable, incomprehensible. In a word, You are love, and my Love. . . . If You wish me to love You then give me love, for without Love I cannot live. . . . You are my love and my life. I want nothing less than Yourself. . . . I love You then without alloy. Be pitiless in consuming me and suppressing in me whatever is not pure love.

In following Marie's mystic journey, it is interesting to note that during this period she again mentions the Sacred Heart and her conception of the part that this divine heart plays in the spiritual life of His elect. More than three years had passed since that night when Our Lord had taken her heart and enclosed it within His own. With this second reference to the Sacred Heart, a new note is added; although it is still a personal grace, there seems to be about it a wider vision. Careful as always to warn her reader that the imagination played no part in her experience, that the images she uses are only symbols to express what passed wholly in the understanding, she continues:

One day in prayer, I understood that the Son of God, the Second Person of the most holy Trinity, was like the bosom and heart of the Father. It is not that I saw anything with my imagination, but I do not know how else to express it to make myself understood. In this bosom I saw an altar of love. All the well-beloved of the Father were sheltered here, consumed by its fire; and I saw that it was there that I also must live.

And then, turning to this heart, she exclaims:

My heart is bare in Your presence near the altar of Your Sacred Heart. I am all Yours as You are all mine. Possess me and let me possess You by a commingling of love. Yet

one thing more: O Sacred Altar, let the sacrifice be made on You . . . could I possibly be so close to You and laid on an altar of fire without being wholly consumed by love.

More and more she was "wholly consumed by love." With each new grace her longing for solitude was augmented, and it sometimes seemed to her that she could not continue a life in a world which was so contrary to all that she loved. When in 1621, shortly after she had made her vow of obedience, she had spoken to Dom Raymond of her desire for religious life, he had answered judiciously that perhaps in time she might consider such a course, but certainly not while her child was still so young. Claude had then been but two years old; now he was nine. Marie was not unaware of the obstacles she would meet should she make such a decision: Claude and Paul Buisson, her father, her son. Reason seemed to be all on their side, but love rose higher than reason, and Marie continued to hope.

One day while entertaining some of her sister's guests she was impelled to excuse herself, and at the bidding of "my Divine Spouse . . . to go with Him to my room." No sooner had she reached it than a "loving violence" overcame her and, powerless, she dropped on her knees. Her heart was filled with the words of St. Paul, "The Spirit himself asks for you with unspeakable groanings," and it seemed to her that God could deny her nothing. With a temerity which later astonished her, she asked, "What pleasure do You take in making me suffer thus? . . . You must take me and put me in this blessed dwelling and draw me Yourself from the corruption of the world, since its spirit is so contrary to Yours." God's answer to her audacity was not long in coming, for she writes:

After this, my Divine Spouse, who had been pleased to see my suffering, united me to Himself in an indescribable manner, and I was for sometime as it were weak and fainting within Him. Then as if He wished to console me, He told me very clearly and with tender love that if I would have a little patience He would fully accomplish my desire. After these words it seemed that He wished to consume me in His divine embrace and He once more confirmed His promise to me.

CHAPTER 5

The years that had followed Marie's first desire for religious life had brought great changes in the religious spirit of France. With the suppression of Calvinism and the half-peace that followed came a spontaneous cry for monastic reform. It was a cry that penetrated both city and province, and soon swept far beyond the boundaries of France itself. Now that the period of persecution and anxiety had ceased, there was little excuse for those violations of cloister and common observance which had so insidiously fixed their roots in the soil of even hitherto fervent monasteries. Weeding began in earnest; idealists, perfectionists, ardent souls who were willing to relinquish all in the service of God, offered themselves for the task. The work begun so generously with but few laborers found an equally generous response. Soon cloisters which had been fast becoming relics of a past order were crowded to their doors. New foundations sprang up everywhere, discovering a plenitude of capable subjects. Both the active and contemplative spirit were well represented in this spiritual resurgence. In the ten years between 1605 and 1615 the Carmelite nuns made ten French foundations. The Order of the Visitation, whose first house had been established in 1610, numbered eighty-seven convents at the death of its foundress, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, in 1641. The Feuillantines, as redoubtable as their Feuillant Brothers, had established three houses—at Toulouse, Paris, Luxembourg. The Daughters of Charity had already instituted their program of good works, and the Benedictines continued their plan of reform and expansion.

So far, however, Marie's vocation had not been directed to any particular order. It was the ideal of religious vows by which she would be solemnly and irrevocably consecrated to God, rather than a particular mode of life, which drew her to monastic con-

separation. However, with the interior assurance which seemed to indicate that the time of fulfillment was not far off, it was necessary that she make a choice. The mode of her spiritual life would certainly seem to direct her to a contemplative order, and in this supposition Dom Raymond concurred.

The Feuillantines naturally occupied first place in her thoughts, although at that time they had no convent at Tours. Their spirit of prayer and penance was identical with that of their Brother order; and while the excessive austerities of their founder were in some degree mitigated, nevertheless they still surpassed even the severe practices of the reformed Carmels. Besides their spirit, which seemed so congruous to Marie's own desires, there were other considerations which would also seem to lead her to the Feuillantines of Paris. Her Feuillant director, Dom Raymond, despite the rigor of his direction, never doubted the worth of the soul before him; Dom Eustache, too, recognized in her the power of unusual graces. Between them the Father General heard of her, and in a visit to Tours he sent for her. Dom Claude explains with filial pride that at the meeting the General was "overcome" by the virtues of the woman before him. He was, at any rate, sufficiently impressed to offer Marie the first vacant place in the Paris monastery; more than that, he assured her that the Feuillant Fathers at Tours were prepared to assume the care of her son, thus removing the last obstacle to her religious vocation.

Marie could scarcely have hoped for more efficacious help; yet once again she hesitated, as she had done almost fifteen years before when her mother had suggested the Abbey of Beaumont les Tours as the solution to her proposed vocation. She could give no reason for her hesitation then or now, except for the limping explanation that she did not feel "satisfied."

The Feuillants were not the only ones who had heard of Madame Martin's singular prowess in things both spiritual and practical, for in 1628 Antoine de Révol, then Bishop of Dol, on his way from the Visitation at Paris stopped at Tours and asked her to come to Bretagne to found a Visitation convent in his diocese. Although the Visitation Order had been established for more than twenty years, there was as yet no convent at Tours, and we can assume that Marie knew no religious of that order. Since it was one

of the notable points of St. Francis de Sales' rule that the Visitation was to follow a mode of life which would not prohibit those delicate in health, Marie could have felt no attraction for an order which would necessarily admit of few corporal austerities. Bishop Révol returned to Dol unaccompanied, having been told tactfully that his venture needed someone of more experience.¹

There was, however, close to home, in the very parish in which Marie lived, a convent which she passed every morning on her way to work and to which she felt a growing attraction. This was the monastery of the Religious of St. Ursula. Their reputation was not for the austerities of the Feuillantines nor the strict contemplation of the Carmelites, but for the education of young girls. It was this that drew Marie more than any other consideration, for she had, she writes, "an interior attraction for the instruction of souls," continuing, "I remember that the first thought I had of being a religious after my conversion [the Vision of the Precious Blood in 1620] had been to be an Ursuline." Interestingly enough, Marie's attraction could have come from no natural contact, for the Ursulines had not yet been established in Tours and Marie admitted she knew nothing about them.

When in 1622 the Ursulines of Saumur had applied for permission to establish a convent in Tours, they had not met with the opposition so frequently meted out to contemplative and mendicant orders. A year or two before, when the Capuchines had applied for this permission, they were told that Tours had already enough poor to take care of. And it was, indeed, often true that in those years of famine and plague there was little to be given to the religious orders who depended on alms for their sustenance. With the Ursulines, who were established above all for the education of youth, it was a different matter, and in the brief drawn up by the City Council, we read: "These religious have a public school where young girls who are old enough learn to read, to write, and work, all of which is very useful for the inhabitants who wish to send their children here, particularly to be taught their religion."² And with this consideration in mind, municipal permission was given for the new foundation.

On August 11, 1622, the religious were provisionally established

in a house belonging to Monsieur Gatien which had formerly been used as a treasury. Three years later they moved to La Petite Bourdaisière on the Rue de Poitou, which later became La Rue des Ursulines. This was in 1625, and it was this building which Marie mentions that she passed every day on her way to and from work, adding, "Every time I passed their monastery my spirit and my heart gave a penetrating leap which swept me into this holy house; this happened without any preceding reflexion on my part. This movement impressed me with the fact that God wanted me there; and as many times a day as I passed this place, it was always the same."

Meanwhile Marie had made the acquaintance of Mother Françoise de St. Bernard, then subprioress of the Ursuline convent. At once there was established a bond of sympathy and understanding so great that Marie writes with marked affection, "One time when I was with her I wanted never again to be separated." Mother St. Bernard seems to have shared not only Marie's love of the interior life, but also her practical sense, for she was within a period of eight years sent to make two foundations. In 1622, when permission for the proposed Tourangelle convent had been granted, it was Mother St. Bernard who was sent from Saumur to begin the new house.⁸ She took her place as subprioress and remained there until 1628, when she was sent to Loche, a few miles south of Tours, to establish another Ursuline community. She was back within a few months, and it was after her return that her friendship with Marie began.

Despite their long spiritual conversations, which occurred frequently for well over a year, no mention was made on either side of Marie's possible vocation. Marie explains this thus: "Although I was very friendly with her, I never had the courage nor even the inspiration to ask her to help me, feeling always interiorly persuaded that I should leave everything in God's hands." However, at the end of April, 1630, Mother St. Bernard was elected prioress and now, being in a capacity to do so, decided to offer Madame Martin a place in the monastery. Of this interview Marie writes:

Now it happened that she was elected superior, and the first time I had the honor of seeing her after her election, as I left my room, it occurred to me that she was going to offer

me a place. And in fact after I had greeted her she said to me pleasantly: "I know that you are thinking that I am going to offer you a place; yes, I offer it to you." I was completely surprised to see such charity, and I was so touched that I cannot express it. But on the other hand I became more thoughtful than ever, for Our Lord kept hidden from me whether He wanted this or whether I should turn to the Feuillantines.

All of this she recounted to Dom Raymond, who, however, refused to concur with her attraction. Marie never reveals the reasons for his judgment, but notes simply that the interview was shadowed with "coldness and indifference" on his part. Neither does she say anything of her own feelings as she listened to his decision; she notes only, "I withdrew."

She withdrew, with that magnanimous humility which believes that what God wishes, God will arrange. As usual, she was right; for not long after, her director, seeing the mark not of caprice but of divine inspiration in her attraction, approved her desires. Once he had made up his mind in her favor, Dom Raymond was not slow to act. Unknown to Marie, he made the acquaintance of Mother St. Bernard and discussed with her the possibility of accepting Marie into the novitiate. This wholehearted concurrence on his part shows a rare detachment. Naturally speaking, Marie's spiritual home would seem to be with the Feuillantines. Both Dom Eustache and the Father General had encouraged her entrance at Paris, realizing that they would have in her a subject of rare supernatural capacities as well as a woman eminently suited for a position of responsibility within the monastery. Dom Raymond could not but have been swayed by these considerations, but he did not let them determine his decision. The doctrine of abandonment to God's will, which he preached so rigorously to his penitents, was a doctrine in which he exercised himself wholeheartedly. Once it was established to his satisfaction that Marie's vocation was to the Ursulines, no merely human consideration could weaken his decision. At once he became her advocate, using all his wisdom and influence to clear away the obstacles that impeded her way.

Perhaps it was this "great and disinterested charity," as Marie calls it, that weighted the scales, for it was not long after that she writes:

One day when I was thinking about it least, I saw effectively erased from my spirit the affection and desire I had for the Feuillantines and in its place I felt an affection and desire to be an Ursuline with such a pressing urge to complete this plan at once that it seemed to me that everything in the world threatened me with ruin if I did not save myself promptly in this house of God. This then was resolved. . . .

All things seemed ready, and while she wondered whether God's time had come, she heard an interior voice exhorting her: "Hurry; it is time; there is nothing more for you to do in the world."

The family conclave at which Marie announced to Claude and Paul Buisson the news of her departure is passed over in silence in both her *Relations*. Paul's business had fallen more and more to her jurisdiction until by now she seemed to be an indispensable assistant. What would happen to their business? he asked. Marie was silent. How long did she think she would last in a convent at her age? Novices of thirty-one were not the order of the day in the seventeenth century. What of her father, who was no longer young? Still there was no answer. And then came the last shot, the terrible, unanswerable question from which there was no escape: What would happen to her son? It was the question for which Marie had been steeling herself for months, but the pain was no less for all that. There was only one answer: God would provide. But at the moment Divine Providence seemed to be vested in the Buissons; if they refused to take care of Claude, what then? It was their trump card, and they knew it. If they could not refuse to let her go, they could at least by indirect means make such a going impossible.

It was Dom Raymond, who was their confessor as well as Marie's, who forced from them a reluctant consent. There was little else for the Buissons to do but to give in, with what graciousness can be easily imagined. They agreed to place no obstacle in the way of Marie's vocation and promised to take care of her child. With the last wall conquered, her entrance day was set for January 25, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. She was then just thirty-one and Claude, eleven and a half.

Despite their promise that Claude would be provided for, Marie still had misgivings. No matter how good his aunt and

uncle were to him, they could not take her place; and on her part, she loved him so dearly that she writes, "I left no goods on entering religion, but I felt I left more in leaving my son, whom I loved so much, than if I had given up all possessions imaginable." Again and again she begged God to enlighten her, to let her do only what He wished, to warn her if she were shirking her responsibility. Of that period of divine union which immediately preceded her entrance she writes:

I was for several days in such close union with Our Lord that at night I could not even sleep, so powerful was this attraction. I spent my time in His company and, feeling myself in great emptiness, I spoke to Him of what He wanted me to do, and of this child whom I was going to leave in His hands, being ready, moreover, to abandon the whole plan if He wanted it so—not wanting even in this to seek myself in any way but rather to obey Him in all.

No event in the life of Marie Martin has caused more comment than this "abandonment" of her child. Her case was not without precedent, for in that age of unusual graces, God demanded unusual sacrifices. Louise de Marillac, Jeanne Frances de Chantal, Jeanne de Lestonnac had all faced similar decisions as the price of their vocations. If we admit that we are dealing here with the exactions of the divine will, then such questions as "Had she the right?" fade before the light of faith. Marie herself states all that can be said on the subject in her simple declaration to her son: "We must always do what God wants." The actual question seems to resolve itself to: Was this exaction truly the will of God? Of that Marie certainly had little doubt. Brémond, in explaining how she arrived at this certitude, comments:

What decides her is not a vision, but as commonly happens in experiences of this kind, a long series of interior calls, more and more numerous and more pressing. A single isolated *touche* would not suffice. But their incessant return, their growing strength and clarity; and parallelly the progressive weakening of those objections which she made to herself, have formed little by little in her soul a sort of conviction closely akin to certitude.⁴

Marie's good faith cannot be doubted. Is it possible, however, that she was deceived, that in her ardor she misinterpreted these divine calls? Marie, however, never depended solely upon her own interior lights for guidance but sought spiritual direction from those whom she felt best qualified to guide her. Dom Raymond, the Superior General of the Feuillants, Dom Eustache de St. Paul, the ecclesiastical superior of the Ursulines, and Bertrand d'Eschaux, Archbishop of Tours, had all been consulted; each of them had not only approved Marie's vocation but encouraged and assisted her in carrying it out. For Marie, the will of God was manifested to her through the voice of His ministers, and her vocation was determined not by interior inspirations, but by the solid advice of those whom she deemed to hold the place of God in her regard. The remainder of her life is surely sufficient proof of the divine authenticity of her vocation.

Christmas of 1630 bore no shadows for Claude, who did not know that it was the last one which he and his mother would spend together. Despite his ignorance, however, Claude was not insensitive to the tension of impending change which hung heavily over the first days of the new year. Taking his own cue from the atmosphere around him, he became increasingly moody, silent, and restless. On the tenth of January, just fifteen days before Marie's proposed entrance, Claude did not come to dinner. When the early winter dusk fell, there was still no sign of him. For three days workmen and neighbors searched the Tourangelle streets, the docks, the storehouses and silk rooms, the fields of the neighboring countryside in a futile effort to find the lost boy. On the fourth day Claude returned in the company of a man who had found him alone and wretched on the docks of Blois, more than thirty miles from Tours. The explanation of his absence was a simple one: a Feuillant Father to whom Claude had become unusually attached had once promised him jokingly that the next time he went to Paris he would take him along. The priest, little realizing the effect his words had had upon the child, left Tours unannounced; and Claude, learning of his absence, had set about his pursuit in stubborn determination.

What Marie suffered during the days of his loss was an un-

imaginable anguish. The sword pierced from every side at once, and no portion of her heart was left unwounded. The Buissons and their friends saw in the event a sign of the divine displeasure at the step she was about to take. Dom Raymond saw in her tears only a lack of faith and unbridled sentimentality and treated her with a contempt which, even for him, was excessive.

Marie, unable to bear her trouble alone, went to see Mother St. Bernard, who knew so well how to strengthen and console. During the visit Dom Raymond was also shown into the convent parlor and, seeing Marie in tears, entered upon a piece of verbal flaying so painful that even Dom Claude, always charitably cautious in his comments, admitted it was a bit "indiscreet." Where was her faith if she did not believe that this happened with the consent of the divine will? And if she believed, then where was her submission to the designs of Providence? Her virtues were obviously no more than a superficial show, perhaps even a ruse of her hypocritical nature. Such attachment to a mere creature showed her for what she was, a worldly woman who had not begun to learn to control her passions. A house of God was surely not for such as her. At his command, Marie rose from her knees where in silent acquiescence she had accepted all, and without daring to speak she withdrew.

Dom Raymond and Mother St. Bernard, left alone in the parlor, stood silent before Marie's unparalleled display of humility. "Motionless with admiration," Dom Claude tells us, "they wept together with compassion"; while Marie, unable to find consolation on earth, threw herself into the heart of another Mother who had also known what it meant to lose a Son.⁵ It seemed that God, who had hitherto raised her above purely human affections, now permitted the full flood of material love to sweep unrestrained across her heart. Even she seems surprised at the violence of her emotions, as she writes:

I would not have believed that the sorrow at the loss of a child could be so painful to a mother. I have seen him sick even to the point of death and I gave him gladly to Our Lord; but a loss of this kind I simply could not understand . . . During all the time of this loss I felt in my heart the sorrow that the Blessed Virgin felt when she lost the child Jesus in the temple. . . . This thought consoled me, but I

had many others that troubled me and tended to make me believe that all the inspirations that I had had to give myself to God and leave the world had been rather temptations than true inspirations from God. And what is more, those who knew that I was going to leave my son to become a religious increased these thoughts still more; all this pierced me through so that I dared say nothing, because I only condemned myself . . . In a word, it was necessary that I be despoiled of all desire and remain stripped of everything at the foot of His cross, resigning myself with all my heart to whatever His goodness should ordain.

This was the last cross, however, and the remaining eleven days were spent in a divine union so close and so uninterrupted that even at night she was aware of the Spirit of God within her. Even with the prize almost in her hands, she did not cease repeating, "Only if You wish it, O my Love."

On the night of the twenty-fourth of January only one preparation remained uncompleted: Claude had not yet been told. Perhaps she felt that it would only make it harder for him to know ahead of time, for even on this last night she did not reveal her plans. If he suspected, he said nothing, but went to his room as usual. The long night, broken only by the wheezes of the household clock and the calls of the night watch, was over at last, and Marie rose to face the most difficult task of her life.

It was but a few hours before her departure when she called her son to her and told him her plans. He could not have understood the import of what she was saying; he was too young, and it was news that would have stunned a far older child. Nuns were different, he argued in his bewilderment; one's mother could not be a nun. Nuns lived in convents, behind high walls. And all the time beating an accompaniment to his thoughts was the sound of his mother's voice: It is what God wishes. My son, if we love Him, we must want what God wants. It is He who gives us the orders, and we must obey. His mother would wear a thick black dress and a long veil. Once she was a nun she would never come home again. Claude, it is a great honor that God has chosen me to serve Him. Don't you wish me to obey God? But instead of the answer his mother expected came a single

cry that whipped her like a lash with its passionate entreaty, "But I will never see you again."⁶

On this point at least she could console him, promising that he would see her often, assuring him that her convent was but a few doors away on the very street where he was living. Marie, determined that there was to be nothing histrionic about her departure, denied both herself and her son the joy of a farewell kiss.⁷ "One morning, the Conversion of St. Paul, 1631, I left all that was dearest to me," Marie writes, remembering the little procession of relatives and friends who accompanied her down the Rue de Poitou to the great door of the Ursuline convent. Her father, unresigned to her loss, could not check his tears, while Claude, trudging beside her, spent all his energies on his efforts not to cry. "But," Marie adds, "I saw his tears flow, which told me all too well what was going on in his soul. This filled me with such compassion that I thought my soul would be wrenched out of me." When the door finally opened before them, Claude's heroism vanished, and he sobbed with the unrestrained bitterness of a child alone and unwanted. For a moment it seemed that they would triumph over her at last, for she writes, "It seemed that I was being hacked in two." Yet even in this pain she found God "dearer than all," and with a smile for Claude, a smile controlled and unshadowed by her own anguish, she crossed the threshold before her while the door swung to in her wake.

CHAPTER 6

The postulant who knelt begging for admission on that windy January morning was not an unknown figure. Madame Martin had already made a name for herself both within and without the convent; she was known for her charity to the poor, her remarkable business acumen, and most of all, perhaps, for her unusual state of prayer. It was inevitable that the community be awed and impressed by this addition to their ranks: the extraordinary Madame Martin was becoming an Ursuline! Mother St. Bernard understood the situation well, and as she raised this postulant from her knees before the assembled community, she resolved that her first act of formation would be to make the extraordinary Madame Martin less extraordinary. As for Marie, heaven had opened before her, and she wanted nothing but to submit to that most loving God who had, at last, placed her in paradise. To be despoiled of everything was her only desire, so that when she was told that the hair shirts, the chains, the disciplines which she had been using daily for more than ten years, were not customary in the novitiate, her joy was only increased. Since she was no longer a private penitent of Dom Raymond but a member of a religious community, she was advised that she must conform to the regular practice of that community in the matter of receiving Holy Communion. The privilege of daily Communion must be relinquished; instead she would receive with the other nuns on Thursdays, Sundays, and on the great feast days. With each new sacrifice, Marie's heart sang with the Poor Man of Assisi, "This is indeed true blessedness!"

"To be the last of all," she had prayed, and literally she was, as she followed the youngest novice about the house and learned the intricacies and sacrosanct traditions of common life. "The last of all"—and no one sought her counsel or asked her opinion.

Those household tasks in which she had for so long directed her sister's servants were now explained to her with painstaking clarity by a novice almost young enough to be her daughter. Marie was thirty-two, but to the venerable Mothers of the community she was only the "little postulant" who had just arrived.

It was not long, however, before the "little postulant" was the talk of the house. Claude's resignation had soon worn itself out, and Marie was scarcely established in the convent before a disturbing series of events began. Claude had been consoled by well-meaning relatives until his affliction seemed unendurable to him. Having been told that if he went to the monastery often enough, his mother would take pity on him and come home, Claude began to haunt the Ursulines' grounds. When knocking at the front door did not avail, he tried other means. Certainly his ingenuity is to be praised, for there was nothing he did not try. Like some unhappy Peter Pan, he gained entrance everywhere, and his pathetic shadow fell like stone upon his mother's heart. He wandered down the aisle of the exterior chapel, and stuck his head through the nuns' communion grating searching vainly for his mother's face. Even in the cloister itself his voice could be heard, crying wildly at the window, "Give me back my mother; give me back my mother."

The principal part of the monastery was then being built, and it was easy for Claude to follow the workmen and slip unnoticed through the little partition which divided the actual enclosure from the section under construction. He was found in the halls and in the refectory, bent on his single quest, to find the "little postulant," his mother, whom he loved with all his lonely heart. When his own efforts did not avail, he brought his friends with him and, with the vigor of twelve-year-old boys, they pounded and yelled at the convent door.

Marie had need of all her self-command, for she never knew when his voice would ring in her ears or when she would come upon his cap or jacket thrown where he hoped she would find it and have pity on him. Even as she walked through the cloister she feared to come upon him suddenly, standing before her in the hall with his terrible, lonely, accusing eyes. One day he came quite orthodoxly through the main door of the convent, and Marie was sent for to see him in the parlor. He

presented her gravely with a present, a sheaf of verses written by his uncle on the subject of Claude's bereavement and the cruelty of his mother's conduct.¹ Despite their questionable literary merit, they hit the mark with merciless skill, and Marie cringed before this new blow. Nevertheless, the "cruel mother" played her part well and read them through "with great exterior composure."

At each fresh disturbance, Marie's heart turned within her, for not only did she see herself as the cause of her son's grief, but she wondered how long, in the face of such outbursts, Mother St. Bernard could keep her in the convent. She who had sought only silence and obscurity seemed to have succeeded in setting the whole monastery on edge. This cross, like all the others, was accepted "for the love of my dear Jesus," and, in return, she was reassured interiorly by God and exteriorly by Mother St. Bernard, who affirmed that she had no intention of sending her away.

Claude, however, embittered by his futile efforts, soon grew unmanageable. With adolescent perversity, he turned his back on whatever kindness and affection were offered him and withdrew more and more into himself. He was listless, unresponsive, and indifferent to his studies. As Marie listened to the reports, exaggerated perhaps to win her sympathy, her mother's vision saw the boy into which Claude seemed likely to grow. "A good-for-nothing" is the term she uses, and for this she alone will bear the guilt. If this child becomes bad, she reasoned, if he is lost forever, it is she who will be responsible; yet even with this new turn of events, God would not release her from His inexorable desire that she be a religious. In desperation, she bargained: "O my Love, make me suffer every cross You wish rather than that this child should ever offend You." The pact was soon ratified, for one day as she was going upstairs, Our Lord spoke to her interiorly, telling her that He had taken upon Himself the care of her child.

Mother St. Bernard, now in a position to witness Marie's virtues at close range, began to understand more clearly the harsh treatment that she had witnessed on the part of Dom Raymond. A chosen soul, he had called Marie, and one who must be led to the heights at any cost. Since both the superior and the spir-

itual director believed that one reached the heights by being plunged into the depths, the former lost no time in administering with laudable finesse the necessary humiliations. Mother St. Bernard kept an admirable balance in the postulant's life, for no sooner was a word of praise given her than the scales were neatly turned in the other direction by a well-weighted correction. Dom Claude sums it up neatly when he says, "She let no occasion pass without humiliating her to the nth degree."²

While still a postulant Marie received a grace different from any that she had hitherto experienced. Although she had no knowledge of Latin she had always had a great love for the Office, so much so that at one time she asked if she might not be a lay Sister, since she felt chanting in choir gave her too much pleasure. One day while in choir, "chanting the praises of so great a God," as she expresses it, she heard in French the Office which she was reciting in Latin. Her joy was unbounded, and, as she says, she had to be careful lest in her exuberance she should do something extraordinary. The passage in which she describes the meaning which the Office assumed for her is filled with that spirit of adoration which is a pronounced characteristic of her spirituality: "these words were for me spirit and life in an abundance which I cannot express. I saw in the psalms His justices, His judgments, grandeurs, loves, beauties, magnificence, liberality . . . I saw that the goodness of this Divine Spouse had put my soul in a green and fertile pasture."

This unusual illumination manifested itself in other ways as well, for with no thought on her part, she found that she understood in a most profound way the meaning of certain passages of Holy Scripture. Of this grace she writes:

I remembered some words of Holy Scripture from the Old and New Testaments that I had either read or heard. Their meaning was disclosed to me, and I felt my spirit swarming with a host of passages from this same Scripture, of which I had such an understanding that it seemed that someone had preached to me and told me hidden secrets. This gave me a peaceful satisfaction in the depths of my soul. I saw, too, that therein are all sorts of spiritual food for the nourishment of souls and how many are fed in different ways—some turning all into corruption and others receiving a life of grace and love. . . .

Distractions have no power in this type of prayer, and when one is finished, it seems that she has only just begun. After this my spirit felt very free and strongly united to God by a new bond.

Marie, whose prayer had been for so long not only passive but stamped with love rather than light, feared this singular favor, which at first seemed to be affecting only her understanding. Fearing a harmful intellectual curiosity, and quick to follow her own advice that "a faithful account of all that passes in the soul" should be given to the director, she told all this to her superior. She little guessed the humiliation which was soon to follow. One day her mistress overheard her "speaking of spiritual things" to the novices near her, and with a peremptory nod motioned her to the seat of honor, suggesting that Marie would give them all a spiritual exhortation. They waited, and Marie, with her postulant's clothing marking her as the least experienced in the house, bowed before the exactions of obedience and began her conference.

Both Mother St. Bernard and the mistress of novices played this game of humiliations with a facility comparable only to Dom Raymond's; but on Marie's part it was no game. She had long since learned to accept humiliations not only in silence but with a silence weighted with acceptance. Whatever was said of her was true, more than true, for once she had seen the sinfulness of her soul before the purity of God, and this was a vision not easily effaced. There was a certain joy in being seen for what she really was, and each reprimand increased her happiness. God himself confirmed her reactions, for one day He said to her, "Abase yourself to the very depths of abjection; it is here that you will find rest."

He showed His approbation of her course in other ways also, for during the months of her postulantship she received in rapid succession two more extraordinary graces. The first is reminiscent of that union of hearts which had taken place several years before. The years of love and suffering had accomplished their purification so successfully that the union of hearts which the Incarnate Word now desired could be effected without obstacle or delay. The passage in which she describes these moments are among the most delicate and lucid in her *First Relation*:

One evening at prayer, as I spoke to Him confidently, I gave Him my heart, although it was already wholly His, and free from affection for anything else. It seemed to me that, to make me suffer, He wished to leave me in doubt as to whether He wanted it, and I finished my prayer in an uneasy frame of mind without, however, leaving that union in which I lived. The following morning, as soon as I was at prayer and reunited to Him, He said to me interiorly, as though unable to let me suffer any longer: "Give me your heart." At these words I felt completely dissolved in Him and it seemed to me that with this phrase, at once so unexpected and so sweet, He drew everything out of me, taking it all for His own. This happened so quickly that the soul felt herself taken captive without being aware that she had consented, for in these consolations and others like them she is so united to Him that He no longer asks consent as He did at the beginning. At such times, He draws the soul to His Divine Majesty like a thing which has already been given to Him long ago so that there is no necessity of inquiring whether she wishes to belong to her God.

This union of hearts was, however, but the prelude to another extraordinary grace, her third vision of the Blessed Trinity, which she evaluates as "the greatest I have ever received." It occurred on March 17, 1631, at that time the Feast of the Guardian Angels, just a week before the day set for her Clothing. As she was thinking of how holy the cell of a religious should be, since it is the dwelling place of the angels, she felt herself "strongly drawn to the Master of Angels, who united Himself to me in a wonderful way." This union, however, entailed a strange suffering, as though it was merely a preparation for an even greater favor. For over three hours she remained powerless, saying over and over, "What do You wish of me, my Love; do with me whatever You will." When the bell rang for evening meditation she made her way to the choir, although still under the effects of this mysterious preparatory grace. As she knelt in her stall before the Blessed Sacrament, however, the pain suddenly ceased and was replaced by an indescribable sweetness. Once again, and for the last time, the vision of the Trinity opened before the eyes of her understanding, and it was signified to her "more clearly than by any words" that while the first vision of the Trinity had been given to instruct her soul in this great mystery, the second that the Word might

take her for His spouse, the purpose of this third revelation was to enable the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to communicate themselves to her so that They would possess her completely.

So strong was this divine power in her soul that she could no longer remain on her knees, and no sooner had she sat back than she felt her senses grow gradually dimmer.

My understanding was illumined by the sight of the most holy Trinity, bringing before me once again a knowledge of its grandeurs. Then, with very great love, this Divine Majesty united Himself to my soul and gave Himself to me so fully that I do not know how to express it. As at other times I had felt my soul ravished by the Person of the Word, now all three Persons of the most holy Trinity absorbed me to such a degree that I was lost completely in the simultaneous vision of the Unity and the Trinity. What touched me most was that I saw myself in this Majesty as pure nothingness lost in this All, who, nevertheless, showed me lovingly that although I was nothing, I was the proper object of Him who is my all. . . . Because the soul was His own, everything was permitted her. The acts I performed were not even my own, but, I felt, were produced by Him in whom I was completely lost. He gave Himself wholly to me, and I was allowed to take everything from Him. It seemed that for this great God to dwell in me was for Him to be at home, and I felt that I was the paradise of God.

Although in one sense this favor was the consummation of her extraordinary graces, it is, perhaps, more important to view it as a preparation for a storm of interior trials more violent and of longer duration than any she had hitherto endured. Once again it was when she least expected it that she found her soul plunged into desolation. She was still too young to recognize the pattern of light and shadow which her spiritual life was taking; it was only later that she was able to perceive this alternation of joy and suffering as the general law of the interior life, especially for those souls favored with mystic graces.

One week later, on March 25, eleven years to the day since her "conversion," she was clothed with the habit of the Religious of St. Ursula, and added to her own name of Marie the significant title "de l'Incarnation." The day was one of those blessed days,

perfect, unmarred, in which the soul is too happy to be aware even of its own joy. Claude, who continued to be difficult, had not been told of the ceremony, but, instead, had been packed off to La Charprairie, a country house of the Buissons on the road between Tours and Bordeaux. He loved this place, and since it seemed to him that he was being given a vacation out of time, he made no complaints.

Marie, so much older than most of the novices, was not unlike them in her ingenuous pleasure in being clothed in the religious habit. "Seeing my religious habit, I put my hand to my head to touch my veil and make sure that I was not mistaken. When I walked," she writes, "it seemed that I did not even touch the ground." And then she adds with that deep supernatural spirit which distinguished her from her less mature companions: "All that I saw in religion seemed filled with the Spirit of God—the rule, the ceremonies, the cloister, the vows—everything."

Despite the extraordinary graces that had been given to her, Marie still continued to live "fearful before God," as she put it. Although her union with the Divinity remained uninterrupted, she saw her soul "in this great All as in a very clear glass which shows me all my defects down to the least atom of imperfection." Overwhelmed by the splendor of God's purity, she was immediately on her guard against that most subtle temptation of seeking perfection for its own sake. She knew that the desire to be perfect, praiseworthy though it was, must have a qualifying clause—"in the degree that God wishes." As once she had prayed concerning her vocation, "Only if You wish it, my Love," so now in the quest for perfection, her prayer was in substance much the same: "If I wish to be pure and free from all my imperfection, it is only for Your sake, O my Divine Love, who cannot bear impurity."

This purity of heart and of conscience God protected jealously. Her slightest fault was followed by a divine reproach at once vigorous and loving. She became especially sensitive on the subjects of reverence in prayer and fraternal charity, two points peculiarly congruous to her own spiritual ascesis, in which the active and contemplative life were united. These divine reproaches, which caused her so much more suffering than the most painful human humiliation, did not have the effect of paralyzing her efforts, but, on the contrary, caused her, as she relates, to run in

the way of virtue. Concerning one of these specific reproaches, she writes:

One day I fell into an imperfection which caused me much confusion, making me very fearful before God. He said to me interiorly with as much love as reproach, "If an artist had painted a beautiful picture, would he be pleased if someone threw mud all over it?" If I had been ashamed before, now I was more so than I can say. . . . One word like this, spoken to me interiorly, carried more weight than anything creatures could say.

By the spring of 1631 the plague, which had once again infested Tours, was followed by famine, and the city whose prosperity Richelieu had so recently commended was reduced to a pitiable state. Prices rose to unparalleled heights, and the streets were filled not only with the plague-stricken but with those too weak from hunger to drag themselves to the hospices where food was being provided. Sanitas, the city hospital, was filled beyond capacity, and the Capuchin Fathers, who had volunteered to take care of the sick, soon fell before the onslaughts of plague and famine. The Benedictine Abbey of Beaumont les Tours, famous for its charity, opened wide its doors and did its best to provide for the streams of sick and terror-stricken, who somehow felt that a monastery must be a citadel against even death itself. They were soon disabused of their fancies, however, as they watched the nuns themselves, weak from hunger and overwork, fall in the courtyard and cloisters.

Many convents were dispersed, with the nuns either returning to their own homes or going temporarily to neighboring convents. The Ursulines were singularly fortunate, for the chronicles report only one death—that of an unnamed novice. Dom Claude, unwilling to miss an opportunity for moralizing, identifies this novice as one who had "persecuted" Marie at the latter's entrance, but who through his mother's prayers was converted to a pious life and holy death.³ While the Ursuline convent as a whole was not dispersed, the novices were sent to the country house of La Charpraie, which the Buissons had generously offered for the occasion. Again Claude injects a pious note by explaining that Marie, who had been put in charge, kept the novices "gay and free from fear," and that "without disedifying the older nuns."⁴

In July of this same year Monsieur Guyart died. He was already well advanced in years and, doubtless, further weakened by the deplorable conditions around him. Although bitterly unresigned when Marie had entered, he had come to the convent several times before his death, reconciled apparently to his daughter's decision.

Claude, meanwhile, had been accepted as a "poor boy" in the Jesuit school at Rennes, and for the time being seemed happy enough there. He had obtained this place through the intercession of the rector of the college, Father Jacques Dinot, who had learned of Marie's plight through Dom Raymond. Despite the sincere efforts of the Buissons to do all they could for Claude, he had been a lonely boy in a household which he knew was not his own. It was good for him to get away from a house, every corner of which was filled with his mother's presence, and to forget himself in the healthy and turbulent atmosphere of a boys' school. To Marie it seemed like an ideal solution, and for the first time in months she felt at peace about her son.

But God, who can work in the soul without the intermediary of circumstance, once again, with an unparalleled violence, plunged Marie into the depths of temptation. With the culmination of the third vision of the Trinity, she had written of the necessity for a total gift of oneself "even when the soul is beset by a thousand crosses," as though a strange foreboding warned her of the trials to come. Mercifully, the duration of her trial was hidden from her, for it was to be three years before she would feel the arms of God's love around her once again.⁵

Marie had heard the first whisperings of the storm even while she was still a postulant. She had wondered for a time whether she should accept the religious habit in the midst of these terrifying temptations, and even Dom Raymond had agreed that it might be better to wait until she felt more secure. Yet all the while she knew that God would have her an Ursuline at any cost, and once she received the habit she was so fortified that she felt she could suffer anything. Her courage was short-lived, however, for soon she saw her weakness reaching into territory which she had considered inviolable. Like some purulent infection it spread through her blood until soon she felt that there was not a single evil on earth or in hell that she might not easily fall into.

All the rules, customs, and exactions of religious life which, but a few months before, had seemed "so filled with the Spirit of God" now only added to her suffering. Looking back, she saw that never had she endured such pain while in the world, and the monastery, so long desired, now, in a sense, became her cross. Then with one of those amusing flashes of practicality, she adds, "But when I considered the virtues of the religious with whom I lived, I realized that I was my own cross." God and Marie were alone in this struggle, and even the efforts of Dom Raymond availed little; although she felt somewhat comforted while in his presence, no sooner did he leave than she returned to her former state. She was obsessed with the remembrance of how she had passed hours plunged in recollection even in the midst of business transactions, remembering, too, that her only desire had been for silence and solitude that she might be more closely united with God. Yet now that she possessed all that was once most dear to her, she was overcome with loathing. "The solitude that I had loved," she writes, "became a purgatory, and it seemed insufferable to spend the whole day in my cell without seeing anyone." Even her work, instead of distracting her, only plunged her deeper into her sufferings. The delicate Tourangelles embroidery at which she was so skillful filled her with so great a distaste that she thought she would die of boredom if she were not given something else to do.

Again and again, she watched herself fall into the most humiliating imperfections, as though she no longer had the power to control her actions; yet so violent were her efforts not to give in that her head never stopped aching. This powerlessness invaded all her faculties so that at times she wondered if she were losing her mind. Recalling this agony, she wrote:

My understanding was so darkened that I could understand nothing as it really was; everything came to me in a confused way. I even lost my memory so that I could not even give an account of my prayer when I was asked about it. . . . I was even glad to repeat after one of my Sisters the words of an act of thanksgiving . . . because I did not have the interior freedom to make it by myself.

Despite the feeling that she had of "attachment to creatures," recreations, the only time when her solitude was broken, were a

torment to her. Her imperfections seemed so gross that she felt that the novices must find her unbearable. She was apart from all; unable to enter into their conversations, unable to find any bond with them. Sometimes, finding the strain unbearable, she begged to be excused from recreation rather than be the cause of suffering to others. Nevertheless, even in these most crucifying dispositions, she acknowledged:

The depths of my soul were in peace and I would not for a moment have wished to diminish my crosses. Although I have much to suffer, God is always with me.

Occasionally some small relief was apportioned to her, usually during the time of Office; yet, as she writes, this ray of light only made the succeeding darkness blacker:

After this I returned to my cross, to which I was more tightly fastened than before—more sterile, more insensible, more confronted with all sorts of temptations. I trembled before the vile things which appeared in my imagination. I dared not even raise my eyes, for even the purest objects gave me bad thoughts. I had blasphemous thoughts against God and the Blessed Virgin, doubts against faith, a queer cowardice when acts of penance were to be performed. It seemed as if I was farther from desiring these than if I had never heard them spoken of. When it was necessary to perform them, I did not know how I could bring myself to do so. Seeing myself so full of imperfections and with sentiments contrary to all that had hitherto pleased me, my heart was so pierced with sorrow that the days passed in an unparalleled agony; for I wondered if, because of my sinfulness, God had abandoned me.

She was true to her pledge, however, to love always despite her crosses, explaining, "I never gave up my habit of speaking with love to Our Lord," adding, "yet this only increased my pain, for I thought that the words came only from habit, and that it was not real love which made me act thus."

It was on a day when she prayed thus, "offering all my crosses to my Divine Bridegroom," that God offered her the only sensible consolation that she had enjoyed in months. "On whom shall My spirit rest if not upon the humble?" He asked her, and she continued:

I was completely ashamed, telling Him that I had no humility; for as a matter of fact, I could not see any in myself; yet I did have a great desire to become humble. These words of divine love had something so delightful about them that they filled me with inexpressible consolation, and I remained for some time in great peace and interior simplicity.

This consolation, although strengthening in a sense, only increased the darkness which once again rose up about her. Dom Raymond who, despite his harshness, had without doubt understood the way in which her soul was being led, was, by an act of the Feuillant General Chapter, made prior of the Abbey of Feuillant, the seat of the reform movement. In his place, as superior of the Tourangelles monastery and spiritual director to Marie, came Dom Louis de St. Bernard. He was assuredly a man of prudence and personal virtue, but as Marie's director he fumbled unmercifully.⁶ While Dom Raymond had humiliated her with pitiless rigor, never, when it was a question of her interior attractions, did he do other than strengthen and confirm her. He had permitted her unusual privileges in the matter of Holy Communion, he had sanctioned her practice of penance, and he had confirmed her method of prayer. His direction proved without doubt that he knew he was dealing with an extraordinary soul. Harsh as his judgments often were, he knew too well the value of peace of soul to leave Marie in doubt when she sought his advice. Dom Louis, while no more severe, took no trouble to hide his own doubts about the "virtue" of Marie's life. His decisions were vacillating as well—one time laughing at her, another time telling her to continue in the way she was walking. Most painful of all, he sometimes left her for weeks without bothering to answer her questions, and that when she was so desperate that, as she writes, "One day when I was near a window, I was sorely tempted to throw myself out."

Her own description of the suffering she endured under his direction is most revealing:

My confessor only served to increase my difficulties, because everything he said to me was merely a means to mortify me, either because I did not make him understand my interior state or because he intended to test me. After listening to an account of my prayer, he told me that I had been deluded. I

told him my sufferings and all my miseries: how upon leaving my prayer, I was without satisfaction; how when I examined my reactions it seemed to me that I had consented to all the evil thoughts which had presented themselves; that it seemed that, if I had wished to take the trouble to keep to the subjects for prayer which were proposed in the common reading, this would have displaced all those other temptations in my soul. . . . I explained that although I did everything possible to stop at some point of the meditation, this availed nothing for I was not capable of stopping at anything at all but could only resign myself to my powerlessness; yet I wondered if this resignation did not, perhaps, proceed from my continued imperfection. I told all these things to my confessor, who replied that I was not sufficiently mortified, that I was not well disciplined interiorly, and that I had not even the foundation of virtue. All this increased my suffering.

If Our Lord gave me some consolation or some extraordinary grace, as He did occasionally, I gave him an account of it, but he laughed at everything, asking me if, perhaps, I expected to work miracles some day. Thus from everything this Father told me, I was even more persuaded than ever that I was completely worthless and that he was perfectly right in saying that I suffered from delusions. This was my sole interior disposition, and I remained before God like a person condemned to death. I did not even dare to make any interior acts except when, forgetting what I was, I turned tenderly to Our Lord, complaining to Him that I did not love Him as I wished to, though He had been my dear love and had shown such mercy to me.

The fear of having been deceived troubled me dreadfully, and I could not feel at ease with my confessor, whom I feared more than I can say. This made it impossible for me to speak freely to him. Sometimes he had nothing to do with me for three or four months, despite my sufferings. Once in particular, after he had left me in great anguish concerning the manner of my prayer, I was terrified because I thought he judged my case hopeless.

Once again God took pity upon her, and the darkness was temporarily lifted. As she knelt one day before the Blessed Sacrament, "offering myself to Him and submitting in everything to His divine will," she heard interiorly the words, "You who sow in sorrow will reap in joy." At once her cross, formerly so painful,

became light and sweet, and while her trials still continued they gave to her spirit an indescribable joy. The respite was only temporary, however, and once again she entered her former state, which now had become "more crucifying than before."

It was probably during the early winter months of 1632 that word came from Rennes bringing news very different from anything that Marie had expected: Claude could be kept at the Jesuit school no longer; he was difficult to manage and showed little interest in his studies. Thus runs Marie's account. Dom Martène, Claude's Benedictine confrere and biographer, presents another side to the picture, one which treats Claude with less severity. Dom Martène places the responsibility upon the Jesuits, who decided that since only a limited number of poor scholars could be provided for, it would be better to maintain a pupil whose family could not afford to pay rather than Claude, whose relatives were fairly well-to-do.⁷ Whatever the cause, the effect was the same: Claude would return to Tours. Paul Buisson had died shortly before, and in these circumstances Marie could scarcely hope to hold her sister to her original promise to take care of her nephew. What other course was there for her but to resume her old life, which she had left so painfully almost two years before? It was in despair rather than joy that Marie learned that the date of her profession had been set for January 25, 1633.

On the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, two years to the day since her entrance, and in the thirty-third year of her age, Marie Martin, known in religion as Marie de l'Incarnation, pronounced her perpetual vows. All her anxiety over Claude had been for naught, for her sister, despite Paul Buisson's recent death, had agreed to accept her nephew into her household once again.⁸ Claude, now almost fourteen, was present at the profession ceremony, and behaved with what he undoubtedly considered a dignity and reserve befitting his years. Although the days of his tears were over, the wound was far from healed.

As for Marie, she lived that day in paradise. The novice who does not count the days until profession has never been born. Joyous, doubtful, fearful, aghast at the step before her, no creature on earth resorts more persistently to the calendar. But whatever her emotions during the sleepless hours of the eve, when once she descends into these new waters of baptism and oblation, feel-

ing her unworthiness throb within her like a physical pain, there is but a single emotion left. Gratitude in a single wave washes her clean of everything that is not God. Marie, so long a prey to darkness and temptations, felt Love draw her to Himself, and in reply she affirmed:

Oh my dear Love, although I have been Your spouse up until this time through the vows which I have made to You, I will be Your spouse even more now by the vows which I make anew in this holy fashion. You will indeed be my Spouse, whom I will love with all my heart and of whom I will freely ask everything I want, because You will be mine. . . . I was so transported and beside myself that walking through the house it seemed that all was dead to me. . . . I was like a person who sees without seeing and who hears without understanding what is said because she is drawn entirely into herself. I even had some trouble in reading and pronouncing the words of my profession, not that I did not realize clearly what I did, but that I had extreme difficulty in speaking. After this action, I cannot describe what I felt in my soul. The thought that I was the spouse of the Son of the Most High filled me with an indescribable devotion and united me to God by an ineffable bond. . . . I saw the way of love so smooth and all things so easy that it seemed to me that there would never be any more difficulty in acting or suffering because of my Beloved, to whom I offered myself and abandoned myself in all things to His good pleasure.

But within eight days, Marie, who had thought that nothing could ever again be difficult or painful, was plunged into that interior suffering which had become her normal state. The desire to seek comfort somewhere, anywhere, seemed almost insurmountable, and yet the pain she experienced for having sought solace outside of her divine Spouse was far greater than the suffering caused by the temptation. When she begged God's help, only one answer was given her: "Abase yourself to your very depths; bury yourself in forgetfulness of creatures."

The absence of Dom Raymond increased her loneliness and uncertainty, for her new director did little to comfort or reassure her. Dom Raymond, moreover, whether from misunderstanding or because he felt the time had come to remove the last human prop from his extraordinary penitent, neglected to answer her

letters and, on the rare occasions when business called him to Tours, gave Marie no opportunity of unburdening her soul to him. She herself could not fathom his motives for treating her thus, and with her instinctive penchant for setting things straight, she wrote him a letter almost brusque in its candor:

Reverend Father, I must admit with my customary frankness that I have been very much surprised at the way you have treated one who, from the first day she had the honor of meeting you, has been faithful to your advice. God alone knows the esteem in which I have held you. If I have consulted others, it was because you were not available and I was in great need. I expected to be able to give you an account of myself, and prepared to do so . . . but your coldness toward me closed my lips—to say nothing of your suggestion that we close our interview after I had spoken only a few sentences. The respect which I owe you does not permit me to oppose your treatment of me—rather I obey you with the same submission which I have formerly shown in things which were very pleasing to me. Yet it is true that when you dismissed me as you did, I did not have the courage to ask to see you again even though you were here in Tours for almost three months. I wonder if it was the bad use that I have made of your counsel which is responsible for this deprivation.

Never was her confidence in Dom Raymond's direction more manifest than here, for despite the rebuffs which cut so deeply, she continued to open her soul before him with that utter disregard for mere sensitivity and that marked singleness of purpose which characterized all Marie's actions.

It was in this same letter that, attempting to account for her long continued trials, she described that nudity of soul which God demands of those who seek to belong wholly to Him:

I must confess that the closer I come to God, the more I realize that there is still something hindering me which I must remove. When I see the importance of this admirable virtue [spiritual poverty], I beg my Divine Spouse that He will be merciless in stripping me of everything that could be an obstacle. He has done so, but, as I have told you, it is a continual martyrdom for me, interior as well as exterior. It is what I love most which causes me the most suffering. Yet although this state

is very painful, I would not wish to change it for all the delights imaginable because it leads me to my Heavenly Spouse, whom I desire above all things.

Mother St. Bernard had never doubted the reality of Marie's interior sufferings, however she might have minimized them to the latter. Perhaps she had hoped that the grace of profession would be sufficient to free her from them, but now, seeing her in a state more painful than before, she recognized the imprint of an unusual trial. She knew how great Marie's dependence on Dom Raymond had been, and she also realized the inadequacy of Dom Louis' direction. Even if Dom Raymond were willing to enter into a long and frequent correspondence, posts were at best slow and uncertain. When Marie said that her desperation was so acute that it cost her a struggle not to throw herself out of the nearest window, Mother St. Bernard knew her virtue too well to consider her statement exaggeration. Marie undoubtedly had need of a director who was experienced, prudent, and, above all, available.

In Lent of 1633, directly following her profession, Father George de la Haye of the Society of Jesus gave the Lenten talks to the Ursuline community. The Jesuits had only recently established themselves in Tours, their house on the Rue des Petites-Minimes having been opened on June 12 of the previous year. Father de la Haye, already well known in Tours through his preaching at the Cathedral in the winter of 1633, had spoken at the convent during the preceding Advent. Mother St. Bernard, listening to his conferences, wondered if in him Marie might not find a sympathetic director, and lost no time in putting the question to her. Marie admitted that for some time she had wanted to speak to the Jesuit Fathers, but feeling that this might indicate a certain fickleness of mind, and always hoping for the return of Dom Raymond, she had said nothing of her desires to her superior. Mother St. Bernard having ascertained Marie's desires, now made arrangements for a meeting. It was a happy encounter on both sides, for the old confidence which Marie had once given to Dom Raymond she now found she could give without reserve to this new director. The difficulty she had feared in trying to explain her interior life evaporated with her first word; and on his part, Father de la Haye placed no restrictions on her, letting her speak as she would and giving her all the time she needed.

He would not risk a hasty decision, and at the end of their first interview he told her what he wished her to do: "When he had finished listening to me, he ordered me to write out an account of God's action upon me from my childhood on, including everything that had happened during the course of the graces which it had pleased His Divine Majesty to send me." But Marie, not content unless she could establish the whole picture, continued: ". . . it gave me great repugnance to do this, unless I also wrote out all the sins and imperfections which I could remember, so that by this means he might be better able to judge my dispositions."

It was on Good Friday that she carried out this command. Her own testimony bears witness of the obvious charismatic character of this account:

Good Friday, when I was about to begin my work, I was drawn deep within myself so that it was impossible to concentrate on any exterior act. I could concentrate only on God, in whom my mind and heart were totally immersed. In this withdrawal, all the graces which God had ever given me appeared simultaneously before me while I remained united to His Divine Goodness. This sight inspired me to obey the command that had been given me. I was glad that I was allowed to write all my sins as well, so that some judgment could be reached as to whether they were compatible with such great graces as well as giving people the opportunity to know me as one who had made bad use of God's graces. Thus, without any further examination, I saw before me both my sins and the graces which God had bestowed on me, and with the permission of my superior I wrote both of them together. Otherwise, it would have seemed to me that I had been a hypocrite to tell the good that people desired to know and to be silent concerning the evil that was in me.

This account, written for Father de la Haye, forms what is known as her *First Relation* or the *Relation of 1633*. It is upon this that Dom Claude draws heavily for the first part of his biography and which, in turn, Dom Jamet attempts to reconstruct from the intricate mosaic of Dom Claude's work. The original manuscript has long been lost, a fact which makes Dom Jamet's efforts at rehabilitation a largely conjectural affair. Claude, with his long-standing plans for a life of his mother, had begun his search for

source material long before her death. He knew that there had once existed an account written for her director, but more than this he could not discover. In 1652 Father de la Haye had died, giving Marie's private papers to the Ursulines of St. Denis with the warning that they should keep them hidden until after Marie's death. So faithfully did they adhere to their promise that Claude searched in vain from 1652 until his mother's death twenty years later, at which time the nuns obligingly uncovered their secret and lent him the manuscript for his work, which was already in progress. Whether or not Dom Claude returned it to its guardians we have no way of knowing, for from this point on the manuscript is entirely lost sight of.

Father de la Haye was able to help Marie materially as well as spiritually, for no sooner had he heard about Claude and his recent difficulties at Rennes than he suggested that he should be sent to the Jesuit school at Orléans, then under the direction of the future missionary, Father Antoine Poncet. This, apparently, was Marie's first contact with Father Poncet, who was later to exert profound influence on her missionary vocation.⁹ In the matter of Claude's education, money was again a problem, for since the "poor scholar" plan had failed once, it did not seem feasible to rely on it a second time. Claude Buisson, still a widow, could hardly be expected to undertake all the expenses. Father de la Haye, however, succeeded in interesting several people of means, and with their concerted help Claude was sent to Orléans, where he passed the years from 1633 to 1639.

With the first meeting between Marie and her new director, there began for her a period of respite—one of those small comfortings which God occasionally sent to break the darkness of the night. She later wrote, "When I had begun to open my heart to this priest, all my pains disappeared. . . . My obedience diminished all my crosses and made me rejoice . . . with great tranquillity." Father de la Haye put her soul to rest on many scores. Hitherto it had seemed incompatible to her to experience the continual presence of God despite the flightiness of her imagination. She had also worried because she could not follow the points for meditation which were prepared in common for the community. If this spirit that filled her were really from God, would she not do as the others did, she asked herself. Then, too, the

question of spiritual reading had long caused her anxiety. She had been reading *Christian Perfection*, Alphonsus Rodriguez' famous treatise, a massive tome but recently published in French translation. Yet during those periods when she was overwhelmed by a profound interior recollection, spiritual reading became an impossible agony. Father de la Haye put her at ease on all these points, telling her to do what she could to fulfill her rule and not to worry. It was a decisive judgment made with strength and conviction, and Marie rested in its certainty.

Easter that year was filled with the light of God, and Marie's heart exulted in this new-found joy. Formerly feast days had been a torment to her, for the more she realized that a truly unselfish love would rejoice despite its own trials, the more she seemed incapable of doing anything but burying herself in her own misery. Her paschal joy, however, ended abruptly with the Ascension, "for it seemed to me," she writes, "that in ascending to heaven He took with Him all the joys with which He had filled me, restoring me to that state of temptation and pain in which I had formerly lived." Human endurance has its limits, and she wondered each day when she would see the end of hers. Each wave of temptation left its little pile of jetsam upon her shore, and she no longer had the strength to sweep it away. Wave after wave added its own heap of apparent sins and vices pushing further and further into her soul until she wondered if there were a single spot free from the foul covering of scum and refuse which covered her from shore to shore. Marie's own account of this experience, written in obedience and with her propensity for understatement, is for that very reason doubly illuminating:

All the weaknesses that a soul is capable of suffering assailed me on every side. I saw myself fall into the very imperfections which formerly had so disedified me when I noticed them in other religious. What humiliated me even more was that I could not understand how all these things could be compatible with the solidity of true virtue. . . . I was so tempted by pride that I even thought of leaving the work which I had been given by obedience and going to tell our Reverend Mother that God wanted something more of me than wasting my time with these trifles. . . . Despite all my resistance, these temptations assailed me afresh. I saw before me a great number of

perfections and it seemed to me that I had all of them. Everything in others seemed imperfect to me, and I saw myself as the most perfect of all. It was easy to see where this thought came from and why it disappeared before the contempt with which I treated it. But I experienced new assaults which tried to interfere with my obedience and make me leave the work which had been given to me. I have never had to fight so violently as I did against these attacks. When I had recourse to God to consider in His presence whether I was responsible for all these difficulties, the thought came to me that it was the height of folly to believe that there was a God and that all the things that people said of Him were but self-induced fantasies, no different from those of paganism. Thus, all the graces I believed myself to have received were but folly and nonsense. . . .

These attacks afflicted me to such a degree that all creatures together could not have consoled me. The thoughts against God were more painful than all the rest. . . . After all this, I was convinced that the crosses I had so long endured did not proceed from the will of God but from my own imperfections. The despair which this thought caused me has no equal.

Finally, I felt great aversion for our Reverend Mother, for it seemed to me that she was the cause of all my suffering. Formerly I had always found some comfort when I spoke to her, but now it pleased Our Lord to take away even this small consolation. In an effort to conquer this temptation, I went to her and told her all my trials, even the one concerning her. But far from being comforted, I suffered only more. My superior was no longer a refuge for me; instead I felt only regret at having confided in her, since I thought she judged all my faults to be voluntary and, consequently, would heap humiliations upon me.

The more I fought against these thoughts, the more they multiplied; when I stifled one, it gave birth to another.

Yet through it all Marie kept that exquisite balance which distinguishes with nice precision between grave sin and slight sin, imperfection and malice. Although God seems to have spared her little, He did spare her the insidious trial of scrupulosity. Despite her sufferings, she was grateful for everything, and never wished that things should be otherwise. She could pray, even in the midst of the most painful buffetings, that God would show her even

more clearly those sins which appeared in His sight. On two points in particular, she felt the sting of divine reproach, "not, of course, that I haven't many other sins to my credit," she adds with her unshakable candor. The first of these points was to "consider the things that belong to God apart from Him"; the second, "to be attached, no matter how slightly, to anything but Him."

How long this last phase of her long trial lasted it is difficult to calculate; we can be sure, however, that it terminated before Christmas of 1633. Its ending, whenever it came, was as unforeseen as its beginning. Of its sudden termination, Marie writes:

One evening when through obedience I was walking along one of the paths in our garden, being closely united to God and making fresh resolutions to be vigilant with myself, I was strongly moved to stop and from the bottom of my heart to ask pardon of this Divine Spouse, promising Him my fidelity. At that very moment all my temptations, all my crosses and interior sufferings vanished, as though they had never existed, and I was interiorly filled with a very great increase of peace.

This time there was no question of a breathing spell only; peace had come home to rest.

CHAPTER 7

In October of the year 1633, Marie celebrated her thirty-fourth birthday; it was just twenty-seven years from the consecrating dream of her childhood.¹ The years between had borne witness to the courage and endurance of her initial "yes"; although the child of seven had not understood the price of surrender, she had understood that for some things no price is too great. And as the years passed, demanding their strange, incomprehensible sacrifices, her answer had always been the same. As the dream of her childhood had been her initiation into the way of divine love, so now it was a dream which heralded her entrance into a life so incredibly different from any she could have imagined that only a divine explanation could reassure her.

It was sometime during the octave of Christmas that Marie had her "dream," the second of those preternatural occurrences which changed the whole tenor of her life. In her dream she was with a secular, an unknown woman, and together they were leaving their home. It was Marie who was the leader, although she seemed to have no idea of their destination. With "great strides" they overcame the obstacles before them and soon arrived at a "beautiful place" which was guarded by a man clothed in a white garment made after the manner of the apostles. The land into which, at a signal, they entered was lovely. "The sky was its only roof," Marie writes; "the pavement was like white marble or alabaster, all of squares cemented with a lovely red." Then she adds characteristically, "It was silent there, and that was part of the beauty." As they went on, they could see in the distance, at the left, a little church, also of white marble, on top of which they saw the Blessed Virgin. "The pinnacle was so constructed that her throne was there," Marie explains. In the arms of the Virgin Mother was the Holy Child, and, at her feet, enveloped in "dense fog," were

spread the valleys and mountains of a vast and lonely country. With a look full of pity, the Blessed Virgin gazed over the land which was spread before her. At this look Marie waited no longer but ran with open arms toward the Virgin and her Child, and with the agility given only in dreams found that her arms "could touch both ends of this little church." Her recital continues:

Eagerly I awaited something from her, but since she was looking ahead of her at this poor country I could see her only from behind. In a minute I saw her bend and look at her Blessed Child, to whom, without speaking, she conveyed some important thought. In my heart I felt that she spoke to Him of this country and of me and that she had some plan on this subject, and I strained toward her with outstretched arms. With endearing grace, she then turned toward me and with a smile full of love she kissed me without saying a word. Once more she turned to her Son and spoke to Him as before, and once again I understood interiorly that she spoke to Him of her plans for me. She turned for the second time and kissed me afresh. Again she spoke to her most adorable Son and then bestowed a third kiss upon me. These caresses filled me with an indescribable sweetness.²

When Marie awoke she found her soul still steeped in this miraculous sweetness, as though the kiss of the Virgin had filled the very deepest recesses of her heart. As to the meaning of the dream, she had no clear idea. It was undoubtedly to prepare her, to strengthen her, perhaps, for what lay ahead. God had new designs upon her; that much was certain. What they were, however, was a secret—a secret whispered from the Divine Mother to her Child. And Marie, with that inexhaustible patience born of surrender, did not ask that they tell her their secret. In good time, it would be revealed; meanwhile she lived in the memory of those divine caresses, and felt in her soul new and unquenchable desires for the extension of God's kingdom on earth.

Marie, however, had little time to spend in thinking of the meaning of her dream, for only a few weeks later she was appointed assistant to the mistress of novices, and took up her duties immediately.

The effect which her mysterious dream had on her was a lasting one, however. "Between the age of thirty-four and thirty-five,"

she writes, "I lived in a state of expectancy." With the emanation of this "apostolic spirit," as she calls it, she felt that the monastery was no longer her real home but only a sort of temporary shelter where God would keep her until His plans for her were completed. With characteristic indifference, she made no attempt in the months that followed to discover the land of her dream, preferring "to leave all to Divine Providence." Perhaps, she conjectured, those vast horizons which had been shown her were not to represent any particular country, but were to be a symbol of the whole pagan world.

If this were true, then she had found a partial solution, although not a wholly satisfactory one; for if it were only a question of a spiritual apostolate, she had long since felt its stirrings in her soul. This spirit was already alive when she had turned from the Carmelites and Feuillantines and begged entrance at the monastery on the Rue de Poitou. She had chosen the Ursulines because the "salvation of souls" was dear to her and she saw in their rule the opportunity to teach others the secrets with which God had already filled her. But with the dream of the unknown land, her apostolic spirit grew so strong that she could not restrain it, and she who had formerly wanted nothing but to bury herself in God now found that when she came to Him it was with children hidden in her arms, clinging to her habit, pulling at her veil, as though she had assumed the motherhood of the souls of all the world. This increased love of souls she attributed to the triple kiss of the Virgin which had been bestowed in the land of her dream. Of this period she writes:

My body was in our monastery, but my spirit, united to that of Jesus, could not remain shut up there. This apostolic spirit carried me in thought to the Indies, to Japan, to America, to the East and to the West, to the most inaccessible northern countries—in short, to every part of the inhabited world where there were rational souls who belonged by right to Jesus Christ. With interior certainty, I saw the demons gaining victory over these poor souls, whom they snatched from the domain of Jesus Christ, our Divine Master and Sovereign Lord, who had redeemed them by His Precious Blood. As I watched this happen so surely, I became jealous; I could no longer endure the sight. I yearned for these poor souls; I gathered them to my heart; I presented them to the Eternal Father, telling Him that it was

time He exercised His justice in favor of my Spouse, to whom He had promised all nations for His inheritance. I reminded Him that His Divine Son, by the shedding of His blood, had satisfied for all the sins of men who had previously been condemned to eternal death; yet there were still souls who did not live nor belong to Him. It was these souls whom I carried in my heart and whom I presented to the Eternal Father, begging that they all be given to Jesus Christ, to whom they rightfully belonged.

In spirit I roamed through the vast stretches of the Indies, of Japan and China, and kept company with those laboring to spread the Gospel there. I felt closely united to these laborers because I had been told that I was one with them in spirit; while it is true that in body I was bound by my rule of enclosure, nevertheless, my spirit did not cease its travels, nor did my heart cease its loving solicitations to the Eternal Father for the salvation of the many millions of souls whom I constantly offered Him. The spirit of grace which acted in me moved me to such boldness and familiarity with the Eternal Father that it was impossible for me to do otherwise.³

It was not until the first months of 1635 that Marie was given an answer to her dream.⁴ At this time Father Diné, rector of the Jesuit house at Tours, was her director, "given me by my superior," she explains. He was the first to whom she told her strange vision, and he, with remarkable alacrity, told her that the "vast country" she had seen was Canada. In addition he affirmed that he felt certain that what she had dreamed would someday come to pass. The explanation, offered so facily, left Marie startled and uneasy, for, as she explains, "when he told me this, I had not even known that there was a Canada."

Although she wanted to be docile before this bewildering explanation, yet even when the apostolic importance of New France with its savages and nascent missions had been explained to her, Father Diné's response remained unfathomable. What part could a cloistered nun (and at that time it was a question of strict enclosure and stability in the monastery of her profession) play in the evangelization of the New World?

Marie was not alone in her new interest in the savages of Canada, for it was, as Renaudin remarks, "*à la mode*" to be enthusiastically concerned with the missions of New France.

Throughout the first quarter of the seventeenth century, despite the fact that there was much yet to be done at home, the religious of France looked with longing at the field afar. Capuchins, Augustinians, Carmelites, Franciscans all contributed to this growing mission fever. St. Vincent de Paul gave a further impetus with the organization of his Society for the Foreign Missions, while the Jesuits, whose origins were steeped in the evangelization of pagan lands, stood firm in the front ranks from the very beginning of Canadian colonization.

As early as 1611, the Jesuit Fathers, Pierre Biard and Ennemond Massé, embarked for the ill-fated mission of Acadia, from which they were driven two years later by British hands. While he waited to regain his lost territory, Father Massé, in his position as rector of the school at La Flèche, inculcated his own ardent missionary spirit into a whole generation of boys who in the years to come would do much to subsidize the growing work among the savages of New France. Meanwhile four Récollet friars were brought by Champlain to Quebec, where they worked with enthusiastic zeal. In 1625, however, Father Massé again embarked for the land of his desire, this time in the company of five other Jesuits, among whom were Charles Lalemant and the indefatigable Jean de Brébeuf. Once more, however, after superhuman toil and hardship, the prize was wrested from them by the English, who took advantage of internal quarrels to capture Quebec and carry off the Jesuits as prisoners to England. By the time the Atlantic was crossed the temporary "war" was over and the captive Jesuits were permitted to return to France.

In 1632 a third Jesuit missionary expedition was ready to set sail, this time under the superiorship of Paul Le Jeune, a convert to Catholicism and a former pupil of Father Massé at La Flèche. Father Le Jeune was a man of initiative and organization; by 1635 he had established seven mission posts in New France, and the mother country was made more aware than ever before of the religious activity carried on beyond the sea, as they read the fantastic and touching accounts which Le Jeune sent to the homeland. These *Jesuit Relations*, as they were called, did much to stimulate mission activity and remain today one of the most detailed and accurate sources for early Canadian history.

Marie's apostolic spirit was, then, à la mode; her dream had

done much to widen her spiritual horizons, but that it would ever affect her external life seemed most unlikely. Meanwhile, as she waited and prayed, a letter arrived for Mother St. Bernard containing some startling news. Marie's former director, Dom Raymond, was about to set forth for the missions of New France. He, too, had pored over the fascinating pages of Le Jeune's *Relations*, and, although he had not been graced by vision or prophecy, he also felt himself called to labor for the salvation of the Indians. The letter informing Mother St. Bernard of this providential turn of events was not written by Dom Raymond, however, but by a lay Brother of the Feuillant monastery where Dom Raymond was prior. The latter, well realizing that his departure might cause an unpleasant stir, had made his plans with the greatest secrecy, letting no one into his secret but this one lay Brother who was to assist him in his preparations. The poor Brother felt this secrecy weigh about his heart like the proverbial albatross; the thought that one so indispensable to the monastery should be making plans to leave it, and that he alone was accomplice to this dark scheme filled him with misery. Unable to bear it any longer, he decided to unburden his troubled heart, and by one of those devious windings of Providence it was to Mother St. Bernard that he revealed the secret. Since she knew the Father so well, could she not dissuade him from his untimely plans, he begged. It was thus that Marie learned of the mission vocation of her spiritual director.

Delighted that a priest of "such great piety and virtue" had offered himself for the salvation of the Indians, and rejoicing in this new bond between them, she wrote with alacrity to tell him that both she and Mother St. Bernard knew of his plans, and to ask his advice and blessing on her own vocation.⁵ This first letter is dated March 1635, and the four following months are replete with a voluminous correspondence between Marie and her director. Dom Raymond's replies are, unfortunately, lost, but Marie's have been preserved through the industry of Dom Claude. Marie had no illusions about easily winning over Dom Raymond to her cause, and her ingenuous candor in admitting the difficulty is sufficiently disarming. Her first letter is breathless, impetuous, almost brusque, as she plunges from the salutation into the subject of all her thoughts:

c

The fact is, Reverend Father, that I have an ardent desire to go to Canada; this desire constantly haunts me but I don't know to whom I should confide or where I can ask for help. I have been told that you yourself are preparing a noble undertaking and that you plan to leave France on the first fleet after Easter. Is this true? If it is, then I beg you not to leave me but to take me with you. . . .

Please help me with my plans and give me a favorable reply. I suppose that you will blame me for daring to aspire to such a sublime life when I am such a wretched creature. Please do whatever you think best, Reverend Father. I shall always respect your severity just the same as I respect your kindness.

Within ten days, Marie had her answer, an answer less rigorous and discouraging than she had expected. Dom Raymond, on his part, was amazed that his enterprise was known, for he had prided himself on the secrecy with which his venture was being conducted. As to Marie's own vocation to the missions, he refused his approval until she had told him more about it. Although he admitted that at first glance it seemed contrary to her state as a religious, nevertheless, since God had given her so many extraordinary graces there was reason to feel that here the hand of God was once again at work. Marie realized, perhaps even better than Dom Raymond, how contrary her aspirations were to her "sex and condition"; yet even though she admits she is "ashamed" of her desires, still they persisted. She has even tried, she writes a few weeks later, to "frighten nature by envisaging all the trials of the mission," but this only makes her love it more. "I am not surprised," she continues, "if you are astonished to see me aspire to something which seems so inaccessible, and even more to see that it is I who aspire to it."

Her humility and complete docility to whatever Dom Raymond might ordain bore the seal of the divine action, and in a letter which she received in the beginning of April, Dom Raymond approved her vocation and admitted its divine origin. He did not, however, approve the idea that she take passage with him, as she had suggested; would it not be wiser, he advised, to let him go ahead to see the conditions she must face so that he could better direct in the preparation of her own venture. Human prudence,

however, was never Marie's strong point, and she was hard pressed to agree that the course he suggested was the better one. "What!" she cries, "You will go and leave without us!"

How can you go, Reverend Father, without your daughters? Are you afraid that they will suffer what you are going to suffer? I know very well that you won't find any place prepared, but that is just what makes it all so glorious—and do you want to deprive us of this glory? You say you will report to us on the conditions. As far as I'm concerned, I'm sure that whenever we go we will find nothing but inconveniences. Why then delay any longer in losing ourselves in the arms of Divine Providence? I esteem and cherish this abandonment above everything on earth . . . I look upon that lovely country as the scene of my earthly paradise, where, it seems to me, the fullness of the Holy Spirit awaits us.

Marie realized that unless she left with Dom Raymond after Easter, it would be close to another year before she could embark, since they would have to leave sufficiently early to enable them to get settled in Canada before the long cold winter set in. With this in mind, she wrote a series of letters in rapid succession, hoping by her importunity to wring consent from her cautious director. "Such desire as mine cannot keep silence," she wrote in explanation for the spate of letters which flowed from her pen. She then continued:

I always have something new to say. There is never an hour, Reverend Father, when some fresh impulse does not make me love these poor souls even more ardently. If prayer has power over God, then I dare to promise myself that they will be converted and that the heart of my Divine Spouse will yield to me in this matter, for I will love Him so that He will be unable to refuse me. I am filled with such fervor that, despite my lack of charity, I desire great suffering, for He who has lighted this fire in my heart is strong enough to draw His glory from the weakest and most cowardly of all His creatures.

Sometime during these months Marie received from God another unusual grace, a grace perfectly in accord with her preoccupation with the salvation of souls and with the increasing sense of her own powerlessness and unworthiness. One day while she prayed to the Eternal Father that all souls might be drawn

to the love of His Son, she received a further illumination concerning devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Describing this experience for Claude, she writes:

I realized interiorly that His Divine Majesty was not listening to me, nor was He favoring my pleas as He usually did. This caused me great anguish, along with a deep humiliation and a disposition to submit to His divine justice for all that was lacking on my part. I would have wished to be condemned to suffer all imaginable pains in order to attain that state of purity necessary to win my point and touch the heart of the Eternal Father so that my Beloved Spouse, whom He had constituted king of all nations, might possess them all by their conversion.

I realized interiorly that the Eternal Father was pleased with my advances, since the cause was such a just one, but that in order to hear me He wanted something of me which I did not possess. I threw myself at His feet; I humbled myself to the very depths of my being so that His Divine Goodness might itself place in my soul whatever it was He wanted in order that my pleadings for the cause of my Spouse might be successful.

Then I felt a ray of divine light, and at the same time I heard these words: "Ask of Me by the Heart of Jesus, My dearly beloved Son; it is through Him that I will hear you and grant your petitions." From that moment, the Spirit which directed me united me to that divine and adorable Heart of Jesus in such a manner that I could neither speak nor breathe except through Him. I constantly experienced new floods of grace from this divine Heart, which effected wonderful things in me—things which neither my pen nor my tongue can express—concerning the expansion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

With these words of the Eternal Father her spiritual life received a new orientation and her devotion to the Heart of Jesus a unique character. This is the basis for her prayer, "By the Heart of my Jesus," in which is found the full expression of all the desires of her apostolic soul. Here is delineated the clearest indication of Marie's spiritual physiognomy: her prayer is at once daring and traditional; although it mirrors the Christocentric spirituality of the age, it does, nevertheless, revert to the divine paternity. In its quality of personal devotion to the Incarnate Word and its apostolic zeal it is peculiarly Ursuline. Her firm conviction that Jesus Christ must reign as Lord of the world and

the clear recognition of the apostolicity of her religious vocation form the cornerstone on which she builds her life.

Meanwhile two more causes for rejoicing occurred: Dom Raymond found a benefactor to finance his plans, and Marie found a companion. The benefactor, who never emerged from his anonymity, was a man of "means and piety" who will gladly undertake to provide a monastery for the nuns with the understanding that their work will be the instruction and conversion of the Indian girls. Since by this time it was already the end of April, the unknown benefactor agreed with Dom Raymond that Marie should not attempt to embark until the next spring; the year of waiting, he suggested, could be profitably employed in finding new recruits and gathering the large supply of provisions which such an undertaking would demand. Dom Raymond, whose preparations would be on a simpler scale, still planned to sail within a month or so despite Marie's protests. Disappointment at the enforced delay was her first emotion; but as she prayed for the accomplishment of her desires, her faith rose to new heights, showing her the folly of all human considerations, and she begged, "O my Love, place obstacles in the path of everything which is contrary to Your holy will."

Marie's proposed companion was Mother Ursule de St. Catherine who, though younger than the former, was her senior in religion and had been appointed novice mistress in January 1634. However, even this portion of Marie's plan was destined to be contradicted, for Monsieur Jouye, Mother St. Catherine's father, opposed his daughter's plans so strongly that he won over to his side even the Archbishop of Tours and several members of the Ursuline community itself. In the face of this concerted opposition, the proposed missionary had to abandon her dreams.

In May, Dom Raymond, who had not yet left Paris, received a letter from Marie which it is difficult to account for.⁶ It began, "I can no longer keep hidden the graces which God in His goodness has bestowed on me," and continued with a detailed narration of the mysterious dream of Canada which had occurred in December of 1633. Why she had waited so long to present this most important piece of evidence to her director is a question to which it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer. Dom Claude suggests that the reason lies in her desire not to capitalize upon

the extraordinary; wishing to be like others in all things, she chose to submit her missionary vocation to an examination "according to the rules which God has established in His Church." Dom Jamet follows the same line of reasoning, adding, "Marie has never put forward her extraordinary lights in order to obtain from her directors a decision conformable to her own sentiments."⁷ Since in this case her missionary vocation seems to find both its motive and origin in her mysterious dream, it is difficult to consider that an account of it would be considered "coercion." Whatever her reasons, however, Marie had been silent. If she now hoped to urge her plans by this recital of divine intervention, it was all for naught, for less than two weeks later all their dreams and plans crumbled.

In a letter to Dom Raymond, dated May 13, it is not hard to catch the shadow of failure and disappointment as Marie writes:

Certainly we will all suffer persecution. But if God is for us, who will be against us? Does not the good to which we aspire deserve to be bought at a great price? Take courage, Reverend Father, the love of Jesus will fight in our behalf since we desire only to work for His love. If He wants us in New France, His designs will be accomplished in spite of men.

This is her message of consolation and encouragement to Dom Raymond, who was then drinking the bitter chalice of betrayal by his own. Shortly before his proposed departure, he had written to two of his Feuillant Brothers (one of whom was stationed at Tours) to tell them of his plans. Instead of the prayers and blessings he expected, he found nothing but opposition and misunderstanding. Not content with mocking and insulting him, they went to the Father General to convince him that such a valuable priest as Dom Raymond should be kept in France. Their words prevailed, and on the very eve of his departure Dom Raymond found his permission revoked. Not long after, the "pious benefactor" who had agreed to finance the enterprise, seeing it surrounded with so much uncertainty, began to lose interest; although he did not explicitly withdraw his offer to help, he indicated that his faith in the project had diminished.

Throughout the summer months the correspondence between Marie and Dom Raymond continued. Despite her disappointment, her letters remained full of determination and hope. "Take

courage," "We must hope against hope," "God will give us more than we can dream of" is the burden of her refrain. When she doubts, it is always herself, her own weakness and inconstancy that she mistrusts, never the goodness of God. "The smallest things make me suffer," she writes; "I will be worth nothing in Canada." Yet she adds, "despite all this my soul is more constant than ever in its resolution."

The following November, Dom Raymond wrote that their benefactor had admitted at last that he had definitely changed his mind, so that nothing remained but to abandon their project. Marie, however, clung to her dreams with a divine tenacity; in answer to Dom Raymond's despairing letter, she wrote: "Mother St. Catherine is constant too; she is not so easy to defeat as you think." Even in the week preceding Christmas, she still held on although there was no human aid to rely on: "What difference where or when, so long as the will of God is accomplished" is the spirit of her letters. She succinctly states the whole pattern of her spirituality in the single terse sentence, "An enterprise which is begun for God ought to be relinquished for God."

Her faith and hope were soon rewarded, for in the winter of 1636 God confirmed her vocation to Canada by another prophetic dream—a dream clear, decisive, and commanding. As she prayed in choir one day, she felt herself drawn into God, and once again she saw the country of her dream.

Then that adorable Majesty spoke these words to me: It is Canada that I have shown you; you must go there and make a home for Jesus and Mary. These words, which quickened my soul, immediately reduced me to an indescribable abasement before the command of this infinite and adorable Majesty. Nevertheless, I was left with strength enough to reply to Him: "O my great God, You can do all things and I, I can do nothing. If You wish to help me, I am ready. I promise to obey You. Accomplish Your most adorable will in me and by me." There was no reasoning or reflection in this; the reply followed the command, and my will was immediately united to God's. At once an ecstasy of love swept over me, during which His infinite goodness caressed me in a way that no human tongue could ever express. . . . From that time on, I saw only Canada, and my ordinary preoccupation was in this Huron country, accompanying those laboring for the Gospel. I seemed to be there,

united in spirit to the Eternal Father under the patronage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in order to win souls for Him. I made many stops throughout the world, but the region of Canada was my home.

God, taking compassion upon her as she fought her battle against indecision and discouragement, had confirmed her vocation in a way that left no room for doubt. She, on her part, had promised to obey, no matter what the obstacles; and meanwhile she waited for God to indicate the practical steps to which her obedience would be directed. She was never blind to the extraordinary character of her new vocation and, she writes, "I dared not speak, because it was such an extraordinary enterprise, apparently so foreign to my state and utterly without precedent." Nevertheless, as she waited, it seemed that everything converged toward Canada, and she saw sign after sign which had but the single purpose of stirring her to action.

Dom Raymond was no longer in a position to aid her, and Marie realized that she would have to turn to other sources for help in the accomplishment of her mission. The logical step would be for her to turn to the Jesuit Fathers, since the Canadian Mission was their particular field. Marie had already told her dream to Father Dinet over a year before, but now, despite the divine command to which she had given her unqualified acquiescence, she shrank from speaking.

Not long after the explanation of her dream, Marie received a letter from one of Claude's former teachers at Orléans, Father Antoine Poncet, who was himself preparing for the missions of New France. The letter contained some singular advice, and accompanying it was a copy of the *Jesuit Relations*. The purpose of the letter was briefly stated by Poncet himself: "to convince you to go to serve God in New France." The Jesuits had long felt themselves at a loss with the shy, restless Indian children. Baptism cleansed the soul undoubtedly, but it did nothing for little girls' matted hair; and the good Fathers sighed in expectation of the day when the firm but gentle hand of some courageous nun could plunge into soap and water those squirming bodies abundantly oiled with bear grease. This letter was for Marie a further sign, and she again heard interiorly the words, "It is there that you must go." How, she wondered, and adds:

... I never ceased urging the Eternal Father to accomplish what He had commanded me to do. Once again I told Him what He already knew so well: how inadequate I was, how He could do everything and I nothing, and assuring Him that He was perfectly free to act according to His good pleasure. And so I kept on waiting for His orders to be put into effect, and while I waited I was always in the missions, my heart consumed with zeal. Only a sweet and fruitful peace sustained me, for without it I could not have endured so strong and constant an impulse.

That Jesus be king in all souls had become her only desire; but just as she had once been shown that purity of soul must be sought only in dependence on the divine good pleasure, she was now taught the same lesson in regard to the salvation of souls. "The Divine Majesty wished me to be entirely despoiled of my own will even in those things which He had commanded me to do," she explains, and then continues to describe that ravishment of her will in which it seemed that even the power to wish was stripped from her, and she was left annihilated before the divine will in a subjection more complete than any she had ever before experienced.

I was speaking with the Divine Majesty of the salvation of souls in that familiar way which He permitted me. But in an instant, my whole power to speak with Him thus was taken away and my soul was plunged into an ecstasy which held it in its sovereign and sole good, there to enjoy His divine caresses in an indescribable and loving intimacy. He revealed to me the great merit of winning souls for Him and encouraged me to ask Him for them.

Then my soul, touched by its Spouse's interests, desired with loving impatience that His interests might be furthered; I offered myself as a victim, and would have given a thousand lives if that had been possible. I begged the Eternal Father to enable me to carry out the command which He had given me: to build a home for Him in Canada in which He should be praised and adored with Jesus and Mary. . . .

But this most adorable Majesty, looking upon me, made me understand that while I had wished to seize His will, He, through love, willed to triumph over mine. Ah! who can speak of this loving exchange! He then effected in my soul a sweet pain. I

barely breathed, confessing myself conquered and saying with whatever breath remained to me: "My Love, My great God! I wish nothing; I can wish nothing. You have taken away my will. How then can I desire when my will has been taken away and I am made powerless to will? Do You, then, will for me, my Love, You alone in the justice of Your divine will."

At the conclusion of this experience she found that a permanent change had taken place in her soul: "This was a peace, a repose, an indifference, and a habitual dwelling in the will of God." She continues:

This divine will guided me and kept me in these peaceful ways, in a manner which had hitherto been unknown to me and which brought me very great grace. I no longer suffered anguish for the salvation of souls when I approached the most adorable Majesty, although I still had the same intentions and attitude as before; but now I felt that His divine will was doing everything for me.⁸

For a year she lived in this peace and indifference, leaving all the details of her proposed vocation in the hands of Providence, and continuing her duties as submistress of novices. In the first part of 1637, however, she was removed from this office and made headmistress of the boarding school; almost simultaneously with this change of occupation came a further command concerning her mission: "The Divine Majesty strongly urged me to reveal all that had happened to me concerning Canada," she explained. This order was to entail more suffering than Marie at first realized. God had chosen a most inauspicious moment for His command, for both Father de la Haye and Father Dinet were unavailable and Marie's direction was in the hands of another Jesuit, Father Salin. Michel Salin was a firm believer in solid piety, and, according to one biographer at least, adopted the unfortunate attitude that solid piety and extraordinary manifestations were essentially incompatible. Charlevoix characterizes him as "one who believes that you can never go wrong in rejecting everything which is even slightly extraordinary."⁹ Marie's tale fairly bristled with prophetic dreams, mysterious ravishments, and interior locutions, and Father Salin did not bother hearing her to the end. "He told me to be quiet at the first word," Marie writes unabashed, for no one

was more aware than she of how incredible it was that such a worthless creature should have been entrusted with such an exalted mission.

With this humiliation at the hands of her director, she felt her helplessness more keenly than before. He had not believed her, but had said that she was entertaining herself with "idle fancies." Who would ever believe her, she wondered. And with that cheerless thought the impossibility of the whole venture came close to overwhelming her. Common sense and faith, her staple virtues, clambered to the rescue, however, assuring her that since it was God who commanded it was God who would succeed.

Convinced of her own inadequacy, she turned to the Incarnate Word, begging:

My dear Love, if there is something to be done, do it, please. Since nothing is hidden from You, You know that I am such a poor creature that no one will ever believe me. They will say that I want to delude others, after having been deluded myself; this is especially true in something that seems quite out of the realm of common sense and which truly is, considering what I am: a nun, who should live and die in her cloister. Nevertheless, I wish to obey You in all this. Please, then, arrange things Yourself so that I shall be able to do whatever is Your most holy will.

Father Salin's rebuff had struck hard and Marie's usual resiliency in the face of humiliation was lacking. The fear of being laughed at, of being ridiculed for what was dearest to her heart persisted, and although she wanted desperately to write to Father de la Haye, she could not bring herself to ask her superior's permission. Although Father Salin continued to be her ordinary director, the topic of Canada was, with discretion on both sides, never brought up again. "Some time passed," she writes, when God, inexorable in His commands, pressed her more strongly than before to make known the subject of her unusual vocation:

The Divine Majesty made it clear that He wanted me to do something about the command He had given me, and He strongly urged me to set aside all my fears and rise above human respect in order to reveal all that was in my mind concerning Canada. It was this constant, interior impulsion which finally urged me to write to Reverend George de la Haye.

Yet despite this divine reassurance, she still hesitated to write. Her fears redoubled and she wondered if she were not being deceived by the devil all around. It took a threat to make her overcome her "human respect," for, she writes, "God threatened to abandon me if I did not obey."¹⁰ Against such a threat Marie could not struggle and when Claude de Lidel, formerly preacher and confessor at the Jesuit house at Tours, came to visit her, she told him all. His advice was concise and definitive: she was obliged in conscience to tell all of this to Father de la Haye.

With Father de la Haye's answer Marie was filled with peace and assurance, for in the path of obedience she knew there could be no illusion. Once again obedience had confirmed her way, for her director had written, exhorting her "to dispose myself for all that Divine Providence wished of me," and indicating that he felt that the time for carrying out the divine plan was not far off.

CHAPTER 8

Father de la Haye, convinced of the authenticity of Marie's vocation to the missions, lost no time in communicating the affair to Father Poncet, who had returned from Rome and was at this time at Paris, in charge of affairs for the Jesuit Missions of New France. There had been some correspondence already between Marie and Poncet, and Father de la Haye's news served only to confirm the hopes which Poncet had entertained as early as 1636 when he had sent Marie a copy of the *Jesuit Relations*.

No one was in a better position than Poncet to render effectual help to her schemes, and without delay he began to interest other Jesuit missionaries in the plans for a religious order of women to assist them in their work in the New World. Consequently, the summer months brought Marie many letters from those already hard at work with her "dear savages."¹

These letters could leave Marie with no illusions, for the Jesuits did not minimize the dangers and trials of their vocation. They related with grim detail the terrible smallpox plagues which swept through the Huron tribes, and for which the "Black Robes" were held responsible. Marie learned of the orgies of feasting followed by wilder orgies of immorality which was the ordinary pattern of savage life; she read of the dirt, the cruelty, the treachery which was warp and woof of Indian existence. Yet through it all the light was not dimmed, for Father Charles Garnier had also related that there had been over a hundred baptisms that year at the Mission of La Conception alone.

In the fall of 1638, two more letters arrived from Canada, this time from Father Le Jeune, then superior of the mission. Of the second of these letters Marie wrote to Dom Raymond, "He wrote me a long letter as humiliating as the first. He's a good Father, isn't he? So far as I'm concerned, he's your other self." Dom

Claude, further commenting on Le Jeune's initial attitude toward Marie, writes, "He reproached her with presumption in daring to aspire to a vocation of which she ought to feel herself unworthy."² But even comments such as these, far more painful to bear than the recital of mission hardships, could not shake her resolution, and in a letter to Dom Raymond, she writes:

I firmly believe that my Divine Jesus will give me all the help necessary for this exalted enterprise, for He is Love, and much too kind not to help those who hope in Him. It is in this that my peace consists, and in my resolution to be faithful to Him.

This faith was soon to be rewarded, for the long years of waiting were rapidly drawing to a close. In November of 1638, almost five years since her initial dream, there came a letter from Father Poncet which avowed that "the time was come in which God intended to fulfill His plans." This statement was far more than a pious but vague hope, for with typical practicality, Poncet continued to narrate the providential circumstances by which a woman of considerable wealth and virtue had come seeking his advice in her plans to dedicate not only her fortune but her life as well to the savages of New France.

The woman was Madeleine de la Peltrie, née De Chauvigny, a widow of thirty-five whose only child had died in infancy. Like Marie, she, too, had once dreamed of entering religion, but her father, Monsieur de Vaubougon, had little patience with such idealistic schemes; and in filial obedience she had married Charles de Gruel, Seigneur de la Peltrie. After six years of married life her husband died, leaving her widowed and childless; and once again her old dreams of religious consecration took shape. At this time she was twenty-five years old with a fortune of her own at her disposal, but the irascible Sieur de Vaubougon continued his parental domination. While she waited, hesitating to take a step which would wound her father so deeply, she gave herself with rare prodigality to works of charity of all kinds. Although her father continued his vehement exhortations for her to remarry, Madeleine held out, feeling certain that God destined her for some work which she was not yet aware of. Meanwhile, there fell into her hands a copy of the *Jesuit Relations*, one in which

Father Le Jeune pleaded with his readers to help in the conversion of that vast mission field where the laborers were so few. "Is there not to be found," he wrote, "some good, virtuous woman who would wish to come to this country to gather up the blood of Jesus Christ by instructing these savage little girls?"³ These words had a definitive effect; there was no longer any doubt about the work to which God had destined her: her vocation was Canada. Many years later, Marie wrote of this experience: "These words penetrated her heart so deeply that from that time on her spirit was more in Canada than in herself." Without delay, and with characteristic impetuosity, she began to shape her secret plans. The thought of her father's wrath, of his tearful pleas, of his arguments that he was no longer young, that he was sick and needed her no longer deterred her; the will of God had armed her against them all.

But just as she prepared herself to announce her decision, God himself seemed to turn against her, for she was attacked by a malignant fever which, day by day, grew steadily worse. The doctors soon despaired of her life and a Capuchin Father was sent for to administer the Last Sacraments. As her family gathered around what was apparently to be her deathbed, she herself begged St. Joseph to obtain her cure, vowing that if she recovered she would devote her fortune and her life to the Indian children of New France and would there build a church in honor of St. Joseph. No sooner had she made her vow than she fell into an untroubled sleep from which she awoke rested and with her fever gone. Her miraculous cure was proof enough of God's will, and she now set about its accomplishment with courageous determination.

Her father, still unaware of her plans, was more convinced than ever that she should remarry, telling her that she would be the cause of his death if she continued to disobey him. Many of her friends and relatives agreed with him, and Madeleine in desperation sought the advice of a Jesuit priest. Although the latter agreed that she should not abandon her plans for Canada, he hesitated to advise her to disobey her father openly. A course in which both plans could be reconciled would be the most prudent way; and with a praiseworthy ability for recon-

ciling opposites this anonymous Jesuit thought out just such a scheme.

There was among his acquaintances at this time a Monsieur Jean de Bernières-Louvigny, the treasurer of Caen, and a man of eminent virtue. Although maintaining a position of public importance, he gave himself assiduously to prayer and penance and had established a coterie of earnest young men who wished to live according to the Gospel counsels even though forced to remain in the world.⁴ It was this Monsieur de Bernières who, according to the Jesuit Father's plans, was to assist Madame de la Peltre in her scheme—and that in a rather unprecedented way. Although Madeleine herself had thought of many unusual ways in which she could accomplish her vocation, even she with her uninhibited imagination had never thought of anything quite so bizarre as that which was now suggested to her: she was to write to this unknown gentleman, explain her difficulties to him, and then beg him to ask her father for her hand in marriage. Such a marriage need not violate their vows of celibacy, her adviser continued; but it would placate her father, free her from his parental control, and put her in a position to dispose of her fortune as she wished. All in all a very satisfactory plan!

We have no copies of the rough drafts of that first letter of Madeleine's to Monsieur de Bernières, but it is safe to conjecture that there must have been many. When she had promised to give herself without reserve to the exactions of Divine Providence, she had not known that such a promise would entail asking an unknown man to marry her! Marie, in the account that she has left of these events, is singularly concise: "She wrote to Monsieur de Bernières to beg him to ask her father for her hand in marriage," she writes, and then continues: "When he received the letter he was surprised beyond imagination, and did not know how to reply to such an unexpected proposal."

It was hardly such a letter as one expects to find in the morning post, and even after his spiritual director had advised him to agree to this incredible proposal, the good man sat for three days in utter perplexity before the designs of Providence. In the end, he acquiesced and wrote to his friend Monsieur de la Bourbonnière asking him to act as intermediary in this delicate matter.

Monsieur de Vaubougon was also to have his share in the surprise, for not long after he found himself sitting in the parlor of his house in Alençon, listening to a strange young man ask for the hand of his daughter on behalf of a dear friend of his. Proposals for the wealthy young heiress had occurred before, but she would have none of them; yet this time Madeleine, when informed of the event, said yes with unexpected docility. Monsieur de Vaubougon was beside himself with joy, and would have had the marriage accomplished within six weeks were he not restrained. So violent were his exertions that he was soon forced to take to his bed, where he continued, however, to give orders for the coming festivity.

Madeleine, taking advantage of the liberty provided by her father's illness, asked Monsieur de Bernières to come secretly to Alençon. There, in a friend's house, they met for the first time, and she told him her hopes and plans for the Canadian missions. As they discussed the affair, it occurred to them that from the viewpoint of Madeleine's fortune, there might be some legal difficulty incurred by a real marriage. When they brought up this problem to the Jesuit who organized this scheme, he agreed that a simulated marriage might be better since this would effectively free Madame de la Peltrie from the control of her family but would still leave her the sole mistress of her inheritance.

Madeleine's fear of her father's disapproval was to be short-lived, however, for shortly after her engagement to Monsieur de Bernières, Monsieur de Vaubougon, with characteristic contrariety, fell ill and died. At first it seemed that she was now free to plan as she wished and that there was no need to go ahead with the marriage. She soon found, however, that her troubles were far from ended, for her elder sister and brother-in-law took her father's place. They disapproved highly of the liberality with which she disposed of her fortune—their disapproval stemming undoubtedly from an interest in their own future finances. They attempted to take away her civil rights on the grounds that she was incompetent; and although they were unsuccessful, this decided Madeleine that it might be just as well to be under the protection of Monsieur de Bernières. A simulated marriage was ar-

ranged and from then on they appeared together as man and wife.

Wishing to learn more of the Canadian Mission and to talk to people who had actually worked in this field, Madame de la Peltrie journeyed to Paris, where she was soon joined by Monsieur de Bernières. By this time everyone believed that they were married, although Madeleine's older sister still entertained suspicions. At Paris they consulted Vincent de Paul and Charles de Condren of the Oratory, and had the extreme good fortune of meeting Father Poncet. It was this meeting which opened wide the doors of New France to Marie, for in Madeleine de la Peltrie, Fathers Poncet and De la Haye recognized the long-sought benefactor of the Ursuline mission. Many years later Marie described this providential meeting:

He [Monsieur de Bernières] located him [Father Poncet] at the novitiate house where he was then living, and confided to him Madame de la Peltrie's secret plans, especially how she wanted to take some Ursuline religious with her. At that, Father Poncet recalled my vocation and said that he believed I was the one whom God had chosen for this work. Monsieur de Bernières went immediately to tell Madame de la Peltrie, who was overcome with joy that affairs seemed to be coming to a head. Before going any further, however, she submitted her plans to several great servants of God, who approved everything, telling her that the Divine Majesty asked the sacrifice of both her person and her possessions and that even though she should perish, she should undertake this voyage for His glory.

Fathers Dinet and De la Haye were among these advisers. The latter had Father Poncet write to me about all that had happened, for this woman and I did not know each other either by hearsay or otherwise, except for what the Jesuit Fathers had told her about me. All this occurred in November of 1638.

Our Reverend Mother, having received letters from Father Poncet and Monsieur de Bernières which proposed me for their plans, was highly amazed to see that apparently there was some basis for my vocation since God himself was executing its accomplishment. . . . Together we thanked God, and she told me to answer Monsieur de Bernières' letter.

Even before I had been told the turn affairs were taking, I had understood interiorly that a period was drawing to a close.

. . . All this made me sing His mercies and speak lovingly to Him who is so infinitely faithful in His promises and in all His ways.

As plans for the enterprise continued, word came to Madame de la Peltrie that her sister had declared her incompetent to handle her fortune and was even then having her traced so that she could be placed under surveillance and her inheritance safeguarded in the efficient hands of her brother-in-law. Madeleine, seeing her final success so close, was terrified at the news, and with her usual impetuosity changed clothes with her little servant girl so that she would not be recognized; and in this guise she continued her work in Paris. Nothing now could quell Madame de la Peltrie's enthusiasm as she saw her plans on the point of completion. What she heard of Marie from the Jesuit Fathers at Paris confirmed her in her decision that this was the religious who must be her companion. In November of 1638, following Father Poncet's letter to Mother St. Bernard, Madeleine received her first letter from Marie. It was a letter so joyous, so grateful, so aflame with zeal that the former felt with absolute certitude that its author was the companion whom she had begged God to provide. Marie, overwhelmed at God's providential care, had written:

Blessed be Jesus whose designs are always to be adored, and especially at the moment of their accomplishment. Reverend Father Poncet, always zealous for everything concerning the glory of God, has informed me of your generous plans, and my heart is filled with blessing and praise of that Divine Goodness who has in His own way formed worthy instruments of His glory.

Ah, dear lady, spouse of my Divine Master, having found you, I have found her whom I have indeed loved. . . . it seems to me that our hearts are so close that they form only one in the heart of Jesus. It is in the infinite space of His heart that we will gather together all those poor pagan souls, teaching them to love Him who is so infinitely lovable. . . .

For five years now I have waited for the opportunity to obey the impelling invitation of the Holy Spirit. . . . If only you were here so that I could open my heart and rejoice with you over this great plan. I assure you, dear lady, that Our Jesus would be very pleased and would recompense you Himself for the trouble you would take in making this journey of sixty leagues.

And if it should please you to give us this joy, I know that you would find souls deeply devoted to you who will receive you as the emissary of their heavenly Spouse. And I, although the least worthy of all, still dare to ask for a share in your prayers, and to call myself always yours in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Tentative plans were made for Madame de la Peltrie to visit Marie when affairs at Paris were completed; meanwhile, the months of December and January were heavy with correspondence between Paris and Tours. Madeleine was determined that her expedition should embark with the spring fleets, although she found serious opposition from the Company of the Hundred Associates who were in charge of Canadian affairs.⁵ With the unfailing assistance of Monsieur de Bernières she waged her battle against delay, and with her own indefatigable leadership she continued to make arrangements for ships and provisions. At home in Tours, Marie could do little in the way of preparation, for Madame de la Peltrie had cautioned that all must be kept very secret because of her family difficulties.

It was during the first weeks of January, however, that Marie learned of a new turn of events which seriously affected her own vocation. A letter arrived from Madame de la Peltrie with the news that Etienne Binet, then Jesuit Provincial of France, felt that the Ursulines of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques at Paris would be more suitable than those of Tours for the missionary expedition.⁶ His opinion was probably based largely on the fact that he was better acquainted with those of Paris, although he also maintained that he thought it more sensible to take nuns who were close to the scene of operations rather than those from an outlying province. Then too, he liked the fourth vow—that to instruct girls—which continued to be made by the houses founded from Paris, while those founded from Bordeaux omitted it, feeling it to be implicit in the vow of obedience.⁷ To take religious from both houses would be unwise, he felt, because of the difficulties that would arise concerning differences in dress and customs.

Marie was impatient with this emphasis placed on dress and custom, remarking that perhaps with worldly people such trifles might cause dissension but surely this would not be the case

with religious who had deliberately surrendered themselves to such an exalted calling. With her usual docility, however, she wrote to Dom Raymond for his advice:

Dear Reverend Father,

We are engaged in some business in which our Reverend Mother and I would dearly love to have you with us. What I am going to say to you must remain a secret between us, because of its importance. It is this.

Our Lord has inspired a lady of distinction and piety to found a monastery of Ursuline nuns in Canada, and she has honored me by asking for me as her companion. Until now, her plan has been to take all the religious needed for the foundation from our house, but when she was transacting some business with the Jesuit Provincial, who is, I believe, pledged by word—or at least by affection—to our Mothers of Paris, he proposed that she take religious from the Paris community. To this she replied that I must go before anyone else. Finally, after being advised by Father de la Haye, the Father Provincial agreed that I should go, but added that it would be sufficient for me and a companion to go from Tours, and that the other nuns could be procured more easily at Paris. He noted further that the Paris nuns take a vow to teach—something which we don't do—and on this account he considers their rule superior to ours. Thus, he feels that should the religious of these two monasteries unite, we should assume this vow. Our Reverend Mother and I are both disturbed on this point, because it seems to us that our rule is every bit as good as theirs. Unless you have something better to suggest, we feel that we should all agree that each one keep whatever rule she is now following until we reach our destination. Then we can unanimously assume whatever rule seems best suited to the nature of the country. Please tell us what your opinion is; we will await your advice.

As she waited for an answer from Dom Raymond, a further letter came from Madame de la Peltrie telling her that the Ursulines of Tours had won the day, largely because of the persistence of Father de la Haye. Negotiations with the Company of the Hundred Associates had also been successful, and all was settled for the spring of this same year, 1639. Since her plans were so definitely formulated, Madame de la Peltrie no longer felt the need for extreme secrecy, and on January 22 Mother

St. Bernard told the news to the community assembled for noon recreation. Excitement ran high, but the object of it was not present, "for," Marie wrote, "it was my turn to serve in the kitchen that day."

Speculation as to possible subjects for the Canadian Mission became the ordinary subject of thought and conversations; but on this point Marie kept her own counsel. It seemed fairly evident to her that Mother St. Catherine would have to bow before parental opposition and abandon her plans for a mission vocation; but another Sister had already spoken to Marie in a way that made the latter feel that her desires were of divine origin. This was Marie de St. Bernard.

Although she had made her profession several months before Marie, she was much younger in years, since she was only fourteen when she had entered the novitiate. Most of her life had been spent with the Ursulines, for while still a child, her mother, Madame de la Troche de St. Germain, had sent her to the boarding school at Tours. It was, perhaps, her rare maturity as much as her deeply interior spirit which attracted Marie, who felt for her a deeply maternal love. Her parents, pious people though they were, had done all that they could to hinder her vocation, even to the point of removing her by force and placing her in an atmosphere which they hoped would wear away her desire for religious life. Soon realizing that no coercion would change her mind, they left her free to return to the Ursuline monastery where, a few months later, she received the religious habit. "I was in the novitiate at the time," Marie writes, "and I was in admiration in seeing in this child of fourteen the maturity of a person of thirty and the virtue of an accomplished religious."

The devil, who always redoubled his attacks at the most important moments of Marie de St. Bernard's life, did not permit her clothing day to pass without a struggle. Many years later Marie was still able to describe the scene in great detail:

When the day came on which she was to receive the habit, her parents wanted her to be questioned by the superior of the house in the externe parlor. Once again they were witnesses to the solidity of her vocation. . . . After her mother had dressed her in the clothing in which she was to appear at the grill, she took

her in her arms, and, as if overcome by sorrow at losing so dear a daughter, she held her tightly against her, without speaking. She kept her thus for so long a time that her father, fearful of what might happen, was forced to separate them. He led his daughter to the door of the enclosure where the community awaited her and, realizing that this was the spot where the final separation must take place, he became so deeply moved that he could not speak nor even say farewell.⁸

But the young novice, like Marie before her, "found God dearer than all," and after her first flood of tears, she remained composed and tranquil throughout the remainder of the ceremony.

Sometime before the community had been told of the proposed mission for New France, Marie de St. Bernard had come to Marie to tell her of a mysterious dream in which she had seen herself hemmed in on all sides by the snares of the devil. There seemed to be no path of escape until a group of savage children came to her and, protecting her on both sides, led her to safety. Meanwhile she heard the words, "It is through us that you will be saved," which, although spoken in a language which she had never before heard, she understood perfectly. When this was told to her, Marie wisely kept her own counsel, although rejoicing in her heart that God was preparing for her a companion whom she so dearly loved.

Toward the middle of February, letters arrived from Paris notifying Mother St. Bernard of the anticipated arrival of Madame de la Peltrie and Monsieur de Bernières. Marie was in the garden with two of the children when Mother St. Catherine came to deliver the exciting news that they might expect important visitors within a few days. Now that the time for departure drew so close, Marie lost all her hesitancy and distrust and was filled with great gratitude to God, who had, in so many incredible ways, accomplished His designs.

On February 19, Madame de la Peltrie, accompanied by the faithful Monsieur de Bernières, arrived at Tours. Still fearful that her family might discover her plans, this ingenious woman, with her flair for the dramatic, had made the trip from Paris under the fanciful name of Madame de la Croix. Their first stop was at the Archbishop's residence, to get his official approval for several Ursuline religious to accompany them to Canada. Madame

de la Peltrie had dreaded this interview with Bertrand d'Eschaux; she had written to Marie several months before that she had been told that "the Monseigneur of Tours is a very difficult prelate." Her fears were, in this instance, utterly unfounded; for as the visitors entered the newly renovated palace, they were greeted with a warmth and enthusiasm which put their minds at rest. In the company of Father Grand-Amy, the Jesuit Visitor of the French Province, they presented their cause, which Archbishop d'Eschaux espoused as his own. "Is it possible," he cried, "that God wants to ask me for some of my daughters for this holy enterprisel" And then he added, "Tell the Reverend Mother Superior to open her doors . . . and to receive you as she would myself."

As soon as this official visit had been terminated, Monsieur de Bernières' carriage turned in the direction of the Rue de Poitou. As they stopped before the Ursuline monastery, the heavy doors were thrown open and, led by Father Grand-Amy, they entered the cloistered precincts while the nuns, arranged in alternate choirs, sang the *Veni Creator* and the *Te Deum*. Marie, from her place among the young professed, tense with the excitement of this longed-for moment, raised her eyes and saw before her the woman of her dream. Although, as she later writes, she was not now wearing the dress which Marie had seen in her vision, there was no mistaking the shape and features of her face, and above all her expression, which was at once so strong and yet so full of sweetness.

When the first greetings were over, Monsieur de Bernières explained that they would remain in Tours for only three days, leaving on February 22 for the return trip to Paris, where much business still remained to be handled. He related the details of his visit with His Excellency, the Archbishop, his approval of the entire venture, and his permission for two of his Ursuline daughters to accompany Madame de la Peltrie. Marie de l'Incarnation had already been chosen, but no decision had yet been made concerning her companion. As Monsieur de Bernières surveyed the group before him, he could not but be impressed with the eager zeal with which they offered themselves for the missions of New France. His discerning eyes continued their scrutiny, until they rested on a young Sister standing not far from Marie

herself. Amid the volubility and gesticulations of her companions she stood silent and motionless, but as Monsieur de Bernières met her eyes, he saw a look of such fervent entreaty that he ceased his scrutiny. His eyes rested on little Sister Marie de St. Bernard who, aware of her delicate health, her youth and inexperience, was pushed into the background before the onrush of her more articulate Sisters. There she stood, alone and frightened, and in the face of the greatest opportunity of her life, she was unable to indicate by word or gesture the deepest desire of her heart. She who for the last few months had thought of nothing but dedicating her life to the missions of the New World was unable to utter the single syllable which would put her in the ranks of the volunteers.

Marie, however, knowing of her desires, and understanding the struggle which now kept her silent, informed Monsieur de Bernières of Marie de St. Bernard's missionary aspirations. He was not surprised, for he had sensed in her silence a yearning far deeper than words could have expressed. Marie had, apparently, already discussed the matter with a priest who knew the young Sister, and he had confirmed Marie's own opinion of her virtue and maturity. Thus encouraged in her hopes by both Marie and Monsieur de Bernières, Marie de St. Bernard took herself to her superior to beg her permission to go to New France. The latter, however, although a woman of remarkably keen judgment, in this case feared the impetuosity of youth. She preferred that a nun older than this twenty-two-year-old Sister be sent on this hazardous expedition. To the latter's pleading she answered only that instead of going to New France, she could get ready to take on the duties of whichever nun was chosen. Disappointed though she was, Marie de St. Bernard continued to pray, and before three days were up her prayers conquered.

As Monsieur de Bernières interviewed the many mission aspirants, always there was some flaw, some difficulty which indicated that they could not be sent into Canada. In the end, Mother St. Bernard agreed that whatever human prudence might have suggested, Divine Providence had obviously placed its seal on Marie de St. Bernard. At once a messenger was sent post-haste to Amboise to consult Madame and Monsieur de la Troche concerning the vocation of their daughter. Meanwhile, Father

Grand-Amy informed the Archbishop of the choice, indicating that they waited only for the permission of her parents. But that redoubtable old shepherd of souls would have no worldly meddling in the affairs of God. "Marie de St. Bernard is my daughter now; she no longer belongs to her parents," he replied to the Jesuit; "if she has a vocation, as you indicate, then she will go to Canada, and it is I who will give her the permission to do so." As it turned out, however, the expected parental opposition never materialized, for her father and mother were persuaded by a Carmelite friend that they should be grateful that their daughter had been chosen for such a singular honor in the Kingdom of God. On the evening of the twenty-first, letters arrived from Amboise containing the blessing and approval of Monsieur and Madame de la Troche, and explaining that they did not come to Tours, because they wished to spare their child the pain of such a farewell.

With the agility of youth, Marie de St. Bernard packed her few belongings, and on the morning of February 22 she was ready to depart with the others. She was, however, no longer to be known as Marie de St. Bernard, for she had made a vow to St. Joseph that if he obtained this grace for her, she would be called henceforth Marie de St. Joseph, and thus she is referred to throughout the rest of the Ursuline annals.

In the midst of these last-minute preparations, an unexpected caller arrived at the convent door; it was Marie's sister, Claude, now Madame Laguiole, who had remarried in 1634, two years after Paul Buisson's death. Having heard of Marie's imminent departure for the New World, she had come to dissuade her. As usual, it was Claude who was used as the instrument to play upon his mother's affections. When entreaties of sisterly devotion and maternal duty did not influence Marie, Madame Laguiole announced that from this time on all bonds between them would be broken. She would no longer assume any responsibility for Claude, for since his mother seemed willing to cast him off, his aunt certainly had no obligation to resume the burden. Then, in presence of a notary, she legally revoked the pension which years before she had provided for her nephew. Marie watched in silence, and to her sister's angry recriminations answered only that what

she did she did to obey the counsels of God, and that since she had established her son's fortune upon the bounty of a Providence which never revokes its promises, she had no fear that Claude would ever be left destitute.

CHAPTER 9

Early on the morning of February 22 the Archbishop's carriage stopped before the Ursuline monastery to call for the missionaries to bring them to the episcopal palace. His Excellency had hoped to celebrate Mass for them and give them Holy Communion with his own hand, but his age (he was over eighty) and his weakened health did not permit it. He received them with fatherly devotion, and with the wisdom of age saw the full significance of this first small departure to New France. He was deeply touched at God so honoring his diocese; and as he stood in his red robes with his hands extended in blessing over the heads of the kneeling nuns, he seemed like another Simeon prophesying the salvation of the New World: "These are the cornerstones of that building which will be erected for Our Lord in the New World," he murmured. Marie, with that living faith which realizes that it is in obedience that God is found, asked the Archbishop to command them to undertake this venture in the name of obedience. He did so, exhorting them to recall Our Lord's words when sending forth His apostles, and, on their part, to be faithful apostles. Mother St. Bernard and another choir nun had accompanied the missionaries, and now, at the conclusion of the visit, the six of them sang the *In Exitu*, the psalm of the departure of the Israelites for the Promised Land.

They returned to the monastery for a last farewell, a difficult parting but one softened by a sense of fulfillment and by the joy of relinquishing for love's sake all that was dear. Marie herself admitted later that she seemed to feel nothing, that her heart seemed frozen, so that "farewell" was only a word spoken rather than an act accomplished. It had been thus for her ever since Madame de la Peltre had arrived at Tours. She

lived those last three days as in a dream. God drew her so closely to Himself that she could not give her full attention to anything else. It was not a period of consolation, however, but of fortitude. She saw before her nothing but the cross, nothing but trials and difficulties of every kind. It was as though God deliberately opened before her all that would crush her and then asked her if she still dared to say yes. Of these three days she writes:

Then something happened to me which lasted for the three days preceding our departure. For these three days Our Lord possessed me so completely that I could neither eat nor sleep nor do anything else. I was totally withdrawn and separated from everything. I saw all that would happen in Canada. I saw crosses without end: interior abandonment by God, a crucifying trial from creatures, and a life in which I would be hidden and unknown. Then His Divine Majesty spoke to me, piercing me through with His words: "Go and serve Me now at your own expense; go and give Me proof of the fidelity which you owe Me in return for the great graces which I have already given you." I cannot tell you the terror that I felt at this thought.¹

In the midst of such sentiments began the first lap of that journey which would not terminate until, six months later, they would catch their first glimpse of the craggy bluffs of Quebec's forbidding harbor.

At the suggestion of Archbishop d'Eschaux, Mother St. Bernard and a companion accompanied the party as far as Amboise. Here they stopped at the Ursuline monastery and delivered some messages with which the Archbishop had entrusted them. It was only a short stop; Mother St. Bernard gave her daughters one last blessing, and then the carriage rattled onward toward Paris, leaving behind their last link with Tours. With admiration Marie watched the composure of her young companion. What this last parting meant to Marie de St. Joseph was obvious; yet she said farewell with the clear-eyed tranquillity of one whose vision is fixed on a cherished goal. As Marie observed her, she grew increasingly sure that her choice of a companion had been wholly right.

The little company made few stops on the road to Paris, for Madame de la Peltre lived in dread of being discovered and preferred that they remain as inconspicuous as possible. They

did, however, stop at Orléans, and there, in the public inn, Marie was confronted unexpectedly by her son. Renaudin does not exaggerate when he comments: "This is the last surge of the drama between son and mother. And it is perhaps the most moving and mysterious moment of the whole story, one which makes us feel most the insufficiency of all human judgment."² And indeed no human judgment can tell us why Claude, now no longer a child, had not been permitted to share his mother's secret plans. At any rate, so it was, and it was from his Aunt Claude, not his mother, that the young student learned that he was to lose his mother for a second time. Madame Laguiolle, infuriated by her own failure to change her sister's mind, had written at once to her nephew, suggesting that his pleas might succeed where hers had failed. Claude was at this time completing his year of philosophy under the Jesuits at Orléans, and it was easy enough for him to discover the time of his mother's arrival. Dom Martène, Dom Claude's disciple and biographer, describes in some detail the ruse used by Marie's sister and Claude's part in it:

In order to convince her that by her departure her son was going to be left without help or support, she brought a notary with her to revoke his pension in her presence. Seeing that this did not move her, she sent this revocation to her son, with an urgent letter which left out no proof of his abandonment, no scorn or distress in order to get him to make a stir and to search for every possible means to stop his mother, who was then to pass through Orléans. And in the end he did not lose his chance, for he overtook the coach on which she was riding in order that he might be the bearer of this packet and put it into her hands himself. When he met her he acted as though he did not know anything about her plans and appeared astonished to see a religious so unexpectedly out of her cloister. He begged her to tell him where she was going. She answered simply that she was going to Paris. He asked again if she were not going farther than that and she answered only that she had to go as far as Normandy. Then seeing the difficulty she was having in being open with him, he produced the letter and the paper, saying: "Mother, I would like you to take the trouble to read this."³

Yet even when his feigned surprise was discarded for other and sharper weapons, he suddenly found himself helpless before his

indomitable mother. She was so calm, so transparent, so totally dedicated. He found himself yielding to that persuasive logic which always reached the same conclusion: our only right is to obey the will of God. One could scarcely argue with such a premise, and yet for eight years he had been fighting with all his rebellious will against the concrete embodiment of it. As she spoke, he began to feel the truth of her words; the calm voice continued with its single unswerving message. At the end of this last meeting, Claude's armor fell useless to the ground, and mother and son met in a union of hearts for which even Marie's audacity had never dared to hope. In those few moments of understanding the suspicion and isolation of years were lost, and in that short space was born a reciprocal devotion strong enough to withstand thirty-three years of separation.

That night Claude burned his aunt's letter and offered to God the sacrifice of her who that day had become doubly his mother. And as Claude sat in his small student's room, reliving the memorable events of the afternoon, his mother's carriage rolled onward toward Paris.

The party reached its destination on February 26, and they found lodgings ready for them in the Jesuit house. Actually their quarters were those belonging to Pierre de Meules, a steward of the King, who was more than happy to relinquish his apartment to the Ursulines, since his eldest daughter was then an Ursuline at Tours while his youngest was one day to follow her older sister into the cloister.

Marie's first act was to write to Mother St. Bernard to tell her of their safe arrival and of the unhappy news that Monsieur de Bernières had fallen ill. Although this would retard their business transactions, Marie was obviously amused at the assiduity with which Madame de la Peltrie played the role of the devoted wife. Somewhat to the embarrassment of the patient but much to the edification of the doctors she outdid herself with domestic solicitude, spending long hours of ministrations in the bedroom of her supposed husband.

Meanwhile, Marie wrote that Father de la Haye had been to see her to discuss their plans and to meet Mother St. Joseph and approve her mission vocation. He advised them to secrecy even at this late date, warning them that otherwise they would be be-

sieged with curious visitors. Lastly she explained to her former superior that although the Ursulines of Paris had offered them hospitality, it seemed better because of all the business negotiations in which they would be involved that they leave themselves free to come and go. This, at least, was what Madame de la Peltrie had demanded; and it seemed better for them not to be separated.

While the actual provisioning of the ships would take place at Dieppe, yet there were many details still to be handled in Paris. The transportation allotted to them, they soon discovered to be insufficient, and Madame de la Peltrie, who refused to stint, directed Monsieur de Bernières to negotiate for a small but seaworthy vessel which could be used for their cargo. Further negotiations had to be carried on with the Company of New France, which two years earlier had, through an anonymous benefactor, set aside an endowment and a certain quantity of land for a religious order of women who would devote themselves to the upbringing of French and Indian children. When this act was signed on January 15, 1637, there was no specific mention of the Ursulines; now, however, the concession had to be officially signed by those involved. The terms of the contract were so munificent that it must have been a double shock when, four months later, the missionaries caught their first sight of the narrow, ill-built house which was all that was prepared for them.⁴

For almost a month they made use of Monsieur de Meules' lodgings; and then on March 19, feast of St. Joseph, they were able to move to the Ursulines of the Faubourg St. Jacques. With relief Marie wrote, ". . . here we are in our element; for it is a painful experience for religious to have to be out of their cloister." Then, too, there was much to be settled with the Paris Ursulines if they were to be included in this first missionary venture. One of their number, Marie de St. Jerome had already been chosen as a member of the expedition—a difficult choice to make, Marie explained, because of the large number of volunteers. However, once again the difficulty which Madame de la Peltrie had written of before her arrival in Tours came to the fore: this was the problem of adjusting religious customs to the mutual satisfaction of both groups. Marie had been impatient of this problem when it had first been mentioned to her some months before; and after

living at the Faubourg St. Jacques for a few days, she was surer than ever that the details of custom and dress could easily be arranged. From the first, she admired these religious of Paris with their deep interior spirit and apostolic zeal. Far from finding herself pressed to conform to the Constitutions of Paris, she discovered that it was she who was expected to determine the necessary adjustments. Not for a moment was she made to feel like an outsider; but, as she wrote to Mother St. Bernard, ". . . it seems as though we had been raised together and molded by the same spirit." She was particularly impressed by the superior, Mother St. Madeleine, who had for a time hoped to be able to give herself to the new mission. Apparently she was equally impressed with Marie, for she gave Mother St. Jerome into her hands before even ascertaining whether Marie would expect her to conform to the rules followed by the Tourangelle community. But, Marie wrote to Mother St. Bernard, "I could inform her on this point, assuring her that I would follow the advice of Father Vimont, and convincing her that we would live together in a union which she would find completely satisfactory."⁵

Marie found another element in the Paris house which was a further delight to her: this was an interest in forming a union of all the Ursuline houses in France. She and Mother St. Bernard had often discussed the advantages of such a plan; but she had had no way of knowing that the well-staffed, successful monastery of Paris was thinking along the same lines. With enthusiastic hope for the future of this enterprise she wrote to Mother St. Bernard:

They have spoken to me of their desire for a general union of all the Ursulines of France—I would never have brought up the subject if they hadn't mentioned it—. The Mother Prioress has spoken to me very strongly about this; and has told me that many of the prelates during their last conference, which was held at Paris, were quite excited about this and were even on the verge of effecting their plans except that some other business came along to interrupt them.

For three happy weeks Marie and Mother St. Joseph lived and prayed and shared their apostolic dreams with these nuns who throughout the years were to remain such staunch supporters of the Quebec monastery. No wonder that she was saddened and

annoyed when years later some members of the Tourangelle community accused her of being won over to the side of the Paris nuns who, they said, had played upon her guilelessness to enforce their spirit and customs upon the new foundation. Despite their enthusiasm, however, the Paris community was not to contribute a member to that first Ursuline expedition. Almost on the eve of her departure, Mother St. Jerome was informed that the Archbishop of Paris, Jean François de Gondy, had revoked his permission. His excuse seemed a flimsy one: he had, after prayerful thought, decided it imprudent to send a religious from his diocese on such a perilous venture. They did what they could, but neither reasons nor entreaties moved the inexorable prelate. The Paris Ursulines, not averse to dabbling in diplomacy for a worthwhile cause, begged the Duchess of Aiguillon, the rich and influential niece of Cardinal Richelieu, to intercede on behalf of Mother St. Jerome.⁶ At this turn of events the irascible Archbishop, not daring to refuse the request of such an important personage, won his victory by retiring from the scene, leaving orders that he was not to be disturbed for any cause whatsoever. His silence won the day, and the little company had to leave Paris without Mother St. Jerome. But in a letter written to Mother St. Bernard from Rouen on April 2, Marie indicates that she has not given up hope:

. . . we still have some hope. . . . I don't know what the outcome will be, for I see that the devil is infuriated at our plans. . . . As soon as we reach Dieppe, I will let you know the outcome of the matter and what the Bishop of Paris has done.

The Ursulines of Pontoise are very anxious to fill this place. And if they lose it, those of Rouen are very desirous of it. Should these not succeed, those of Dieppe will never let it slip from their hands.

Before they left Paris, however, an unexpected honor was paid to them. The Queen, Anne of Austria, sent for them for an audience at St. Germain-en-Laye, where the royal court was then being held. Marie makes only a concise notation of these events, and we have no idea of what her reaction was to this handsome woman of forty-two, who after twenty-three years of a mutually distasteful marriage, had but a few months before given birth to a baby boy. France had, at last, a dauphin! *Dieu Donné*, gift of

God, he was called in awed surprise—he who would one day take to himself the splendid epithet of “The Sun King.” The proud mother conducted the nuns through the magnificent, tapestried apartments to the royal cradle, and there they gazed upon the royal countenance which would one day exert such powerful influence over the mission country of New France. Queen Anne with her good-natured charm wanted to hear all the details of their proposed venture. She was a pious woman, given to prayer and retreats despite her almost childish love of admiration and coquetry. She gave the money at her command unstintingly to works of charity, and both the Ursulines and the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu were able to count on her as one of their constant benefactors. Small wonder that a court wit once wrote, “There are only five little words, now, in the French language: ‘La Reine est si bonne.’”

Marie, less impressed with the Queen’s heavily brocaded dress and elegantly curled chestnut hair than with the simple goodness of her face, took courage to ask that she would intercede with the Archbishop in the case of Mother St. Jerome. But although Anne promised, even she was doomed to failure.⁷

Disappointing as this last effort was, the disappointment was slight compared to the heavy sorrow that came to Marie in those few last days spent in Paris. During the talk she had had with Claude at Orléans, the subject of his future vocation had been broached, but no definitive conclusion was reached. Marie was at Paris only a few weeks, however, before a letter from Claude informed her that he was seriously thinking of a religious vocation and had already mentioned this to the Jesuits at the college at Orléans. Marie’s joy was inexpressible, and she at once sought the advice of Father de la Haye. She who would never have used an atom of personal influence in her own behalf, now left no stone unturned to insure that her son’s plans reach fruition. She was informed that the Father Provincial of the Jesuits had just arrived in Paris and was urged that she get Claude to come to Paris at once so that the matter might be terminated before her departure for Canada. Although she wrote to Claude immediately, she waited for an answer in vain. Days passed, and no word came from him. When finally he arrived, he was greeted coldly by the Father Provincial, who said simply that he had arrived too late to

be received into the Society at present. Father Dinet gave little reason for his refusal but advised Claude to return to Orléans to finish his studies, making a vague promise that he might sometime in the future again apply for entrance into the Society.

The disappointment was a particularly keen one for both mother and son, especially because it was so unexpected and so inconclusive. The Duchess of Aiguillon, who had followed all these events with a kind of matriarchal solicitude, at once advised Marie that she would use her influence to procure a worthwhile position for Claude. But Marie, suspicious of court sinecures and fearful of the vanity and worldliness they might engender in her impressionable son, graciously declined the proffered assistance. Many years later she was to remind Claude of these anxious months, explaining,

When I was at Paris, it would have been very easy for me to have found a place for you. . . . But the thought came to me that if you got on so well in the world, your soul might be endangered. . . . Although there were certainly some advantages in what was presented to you at Paris, surely they were infinitely below those which you now possess.

Once again Marie and Claude parted. It was not an easy farewell, for Claude was hurt and restless over his rejection by the Jesuits; and Marie felt a double pain as she looked at her son, his eyes shadowed with uncertainty, knowing that this time the farewell was final, that she would never again see him in this world. *Deus providebit*—how often she had said it during the course of the last twenty years with their devious and unaccountable twists and turns. How often she had said it when God had demanded that she sacrifice her Isaac to His divine designs. And yet, despite her anxiety, she had always believed and her belief had never been in vain. "God will provide"—she said it once again; but never had the words come so hard. So they parted: Claude returning to Orléans and Marie traveling northward to Rouen, the last stage of her journey to Dieppe, the port of embarkation.

They stopped at Rouen long enough for Marie to write an account of their affairs to Mother St. Bernard and to pick up Father Charles Lalemant, who had returned from the Canadian missions the year before and was now acting as Mission Procurator

for New France. It was he who had taken care of the actual provisioning of the ship, maintaining so well Madame de la Peltrie's desire for secrecy that not even the Jesuits of Rouen were aware of the enterprise.

At Dieppe they were received into the Ursuline convent; and Marie, now convinced that Mother St. Jerome would never join them, began her negotiations for a nun from this house to join the expedition. The lot fell to Cécile de St. Croix, a religious so quiet and unassuming that no one troubles to mention her during the forty-eight years which she spent serving the Canadian Mission. In all the documents of the period she is mentioned only once. Marie, who knew her better than anyone else, accords her only a single phrase, but a phrase quite sufficient to describe a lifetime of sacrifice and devotion. "She is a perfect religious," her superior wrote.⁸ Here also another member was added to the group, Charlotte Barré, originally from Tours and a penitent of Father Salin. It was he, apparently converted to Marie's missionary vocation, who directed this young girl of nineteen to volunteer as personal maid to Madame de la Peltrie.

But no sooner did the expedition seem set than Mother St. Joseph received a letter from her family in Angers revoking her permission. They had been frightened by the rumors circulating about the terrible conditions under which the missionaries in Canada were forced to live and refused to have their daughter subjected to such hardships. Marie in desperation wrote to Dom Raymond, then at Paris, begging him to intercede with Monsieur and Madame de la Troche. He made the journey to Dieppe at once, first discussed the problem with Mother St. Joseph and then wrote to Angers. Unfortunately none of Dom Raymond's letters are extant, for he must have been a most persuasive man. The next letter from Angers was considerably milder in tone and agreed to interfere no further in Mother St. Joseph's vocation.

All things were ready, and by April 18 the vessel was in the roadstead; but it was to be three weeks before a favorable wind enabled them to embark. Part of those anxious days of waiting they used to write their last letters to their families and their communities. Marie's impetuous desire to be on her way shows through each of her letters. "The ships are all ready and we are going to leave next week, unless the storms continue to delay us," she wrote to one of her brothers. She continues:

How slow I am in sacrificing my life to Him. My desire to do so is so strong that I think that even in the midst of all the dangers, I will feel more tranquil and sure on the sea than on the land. You know what great dangers we are going to encounter on this vast ocean—the most dangerous of all the seas . . . not that we will be lost in the crossing, but there are all sorts of inconveniences to endure: there are often serious sicknesses, we fear to encounter the English or the Spanish or the Turks. Yet all this is nothing. Life and death are the same thing to me. I am making this sacrifice of myself more willingly than I have ever done anything in my life.

It was, however, to Mother St. Bernard, her former superior and close friend, that she revealed the heart of her joy. It was, so far as we can judge, her last letter written from French soil:

My very reverend and dear Mother,

I beg you to bless me!

How right it is that my last good-by should be to you as I go where our Spouse, in His infinite mercy, has called us. The ship is in the roadstead and we are only waiting for a favorable wind so that we can make the trip out in a little launch without danger. You can imagine how long the minutes seem to one who longs with impatience to give her life for her Beloved. My dearest Mother, how powerful this Master of our hearts is! If you knew all He has done in this little Canadian troop, you would bless Him a thousand times.

As it turned out, we do not have Mother St. Jerome with us; this was a very painful blow for her whole community, but, of course, she felt it more than anyone else. . . . We had to settle the matter by taking a religious from Dieppe . . . Madame de la Ville-aux-Clercs has presented us with a beautiful tabernacle, a lovely chalice veil, and some embroidered flowers to be used as ornament. She is our first benefactress, after you, my dearest Mother, who will always be in first place, since in addition to your other kindnesses, you have let us give ourselves. You will always be my own mother and I will always be your very grateful and devoted child in Christ Jesus.

Of her last days on French soil Marie says nothing. This section of her account begins with the succinct sentence, "On the morning of May 4 we left our mothers to hear Mass at the Hôtel Dieu." This was the last Mass she would ever attend in her native country, for by afternoon of this same day she would be on the vessel

which would carry her to the land of her dream. Here, at the Hôtel Dieu, they met the three nursing Sisters who, under the patronage of the Duchess of Aiguillon, were also sailing to New France in order to establish a hospital there.⁹ As Marie knelt in her place in the chapel of the Hôtel Dieu, her mind wandered back over all that had happened in the two and a half months since her departure from Tours. God had accomplished everything according to His singular designs; and now, at last, she was on the verge of being able to risk her life in actual fact for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. It was but a poor recompense for all His mercy, but what more could a worthless creature offer. Thus, for a long time, she remained prostrate before the Divine Goodness, feeling the Holy Spirit take possession of all the powers of her soul. "What can I say of the donation that I then made," she writes. "Never have I done anything so gladly . . . and I felt that the Incarnate Word was pleased with what I gave Him."

After Mass, the Governor's lady came in her carriage to drive the party to the wharf. The whole city was down to wave them off, but Marie saw them all as in a dream. So closely did God hold her to Himself that it was only with a great effort that she could pay attention to what was going on about her. Yet she adds with characteristic practicality, "No one would have known this to look at me, because I managed to do everything I was supposed to." The single thought that she was to give her very life itself to this God who had given her so much overwhelmed everything else. As she stepped into the launch which was to take them to the waiting ship, all her difficulties were transformed into joys. "At that moment," she writes, "I thought I entered paradise."

As the boat pulled out from the shallow waters of the quay, the creaking of ropes and crashing of cargo mingled with the farewells from the shore. These were familiar sounds to Marie, who had spent five years of her life working on the wharves of Tours. In those days she had thought nothing performed for the love of God could ever be difficult, so strongly did He flood her soul with His presence. But now a new life was beginning; and suddenly, as she watched the familiar shore recede, she heard again the words which God had spoken to her interiorly a few months before: "Go, and from now on serve Me at your own expense."

PART II

“At your own expense”



CHAPTER 10

"On August 1, 1639, the first Ursulines arrived in Canada to build a monastery under the protection of the most holy Virgin Mary and St. Joseph."¹ Thus in her commonplace prose the convent annalist describes the fulfillment of a dream. The swift blue depths of the St. Lawrence, the naturally formed harbor, the forbidding crags which towered over the river—none of it seemed strange to Marie—she had seen it all before—it was the country of her dream. Her country, now, she thought, as she stood steady on the slippery, littered deck. Her country for the rest of her life. And for a moment memory caught her unawares and the St. Lawrence disappeared before the Loire, river of her childhood, and the wooded banks gave way to the green, cultivated fields of Touraine. But memory was vanquished before this new, immediate vision, palpable and divine, for which she had risked her life. Writing later to Claude, she recalled: "Having arrived in this country, and seeing it, I recognized it to be the one which Our Lord had shown me six years before. Its huge mountains, its vast reaches, its site and structure were still as deeply marked on my soul as when I had first seen them.

Eighty-eight days had passed since their embarkation at Dieppe on May 4—an exceptionally long voyage even in those days of hazardous navigation. On that same afternoon, only a few hours after they had made their perilous way from the shallow up the steep sides of the vessel waiting in the harbor, the three boats which formed the little flotilla hoisted sail to begin their eastward voyage. In first place was the smallest and lightest of the three, an unnamed ship provisioned by Madame de la Peltrie; in its wake came the *Amiral* bearing the Ursulines, the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu, and Father Vimont, destined to be Superior of the Canadian Mission; lastly came the *St. Jacques* carrying Father

Joseph-Marie Chaumonot, who with the zestful enthusiasm of his twenty-eight years was setting forth on his first mission assignment.

When they had been at sea only two weeks, some fishermen from La Manche offered to take any letters they might have back to France, and Marie had her first opportunity to write to Mother St. Bernard. It was a short letter, containing little more than the usual platitudes of travelers writing home: they were well and happy; they were thinking of everyone at home. She could not help adding, however, "We have all been seasick. But that is nothing."

However, as the *Amiral* ploughed through the heavy seas week after week, even Marie had to confess that the hardships of the voyage could not be entirely overlooked. Although she speaks graciously of the "lovely room" which had been given to them, she reveals much when she notes that this single apartment had to house eleven people. Here they ate and slept and prayed through gale and calm for the space of three months. With La Manche only a week behind they ran into a storm which raged about them for more than two weeks. The inestimable consolation of which Marie had spoken so gratefully, that of assisting daily at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, was denied them because of the heavy rolling of the ship. And for the first time since their departure they were forced to go without Mass and Holy Communion. The feast of the Ascension came and went with nothing to break the monotony of the gray skies and rough sea; Pentecost followed and still the storm did not abate. Wretched and weary they kept to their "lovely room," filled now with the fetid air of stale cooking, unwashed bodies, and wet clothes. And the voyage was less than one-third over! Writing to Claude years later, Marie could still capture without difficulty some of the nightmare qualities of those endless days:

Although, under the circumstances, we were very well lodged and cared for and in a very nice ship, . . . there was, nevertheless, a great deal to suffer for women in our state of life—one would have to go through it to believe what it was like. For myself, I thought I would die of thirst. The drinking water was spoiled in the roadway and my stomach could not tolerate the strong drink, which made me so sick that I was miserable. I didn't sleep

for almost the whole crossing and I had such a bad headache that I don't think it could have been any worse without killing me.

Mother St. Croix in recalling the hazards of the voyage evokes dramatically the sense of the rolling waters beneath their feet, their precarious efforts to eat, to sleep, to move. Gravity, it seemed, had been suspended and they were left at the mercy of some strange unintelligible and chaotic force which they could neither predict nor control.

The boat tossed so during those days that it was impossible to keep on one's feet, or to do anything without some support; we couldn't even keep seated without holding on to something or else one would roll to the other side of the room. We had to take our meals on the level ground with three or four of us holding the dish—and even then we had a good bit of trouble in keeping it from overturning. During the big storms I never went to bed at all. I preferred to stay leaning against something day and night for that was the only way I could keep my head up.²

By mid-June that calm which had come to form the single desire of their hopes and prayers became a reality at last, and the battered crew and passengers looked out upon a sea stretching tranquilly about them and reminding Marie of that image of divinity which always remained so dear to her: God, she recalled, as her eyes narrowed before the infinite vastness of the waters that surrounded her, God is like a great sea of purity.

As they sailed into more northerly waters, there was a new chill in the air, a rawness which made it difficult to believe that this was midsummer and that back in France strawberries were lush and heavy upon the ground and cherries were being harvested amid the heavy scent of roses. Banks of thick, impenetrable fog covered the ship on every side, giving a kind of unreality even to commonplace objects and making navigation a constant hazard. However, the calm seas permitted them to have Mass again on June 12; and thus the feast of the Holy Trinity was celebrated not only with the Sacrifice of the Mass but with the chanting of Divine Office as well, with the Ursulines and the nuns of the Hôtel Dieu forming, respectively, the antiphonal choirs. For the first time in weeks they were able to walk across their cabin without holding onto the walls, to sit erect, to take their meals at the

ordinary table. They were experiencing that joy that follows in the wake of hardship, and the voices—few though they were—that chanted the antiphons in praise of the triune God were strong and true. *O Beata Trinitas* rang like a paean of victory throughout the tiny cabin.

At ten o'clock they were gathered in their single room to say None, when suddenly, without warning, cries of terror reached them from the deck. As they rose in bewilderment, Father Vimont threw open the door of their cabin to tell them that an iceberg "big as a whole town" was bearing down upon the ship. Even while he spoke, the narrow patch of water which separated them from this new and inescapable terror diminished; Vimont was off as fast as he had come, returning to the sailors on the deck, hoping to bring them a measure of resignation in the face of death. From their cabin the nuns listened to the babble of voices from the deck—hoarse, unintelligible orders as the captain tried to turn the ship from the iceberg's path, oaths of terror and despair, and every few minutes an anguished cry that pierced them through: "God have mercy on us, we are lost."

The anguished cry did not go unheard, for within the few minutes remaining to them the helmsman was able to deflect the ship as the wind veered suddenly in another direction. Mother St. Croix, turning quickly, saw the giant mountain of ice slide slowly past their window and cross behind the ship. As quickly as it had come, the peril slipped noiselessly away through the fog. Silently the ships moved on through the dark waters, the aura of the miraculous providence of God hovering over both sailors and religious alike.

Twice more before they dropped anchor in the harbor of Quebec they were to be close to death: once when they came near to foundering on the rocks as they entered the mist-laden mouth of the St. Lawrence; and again when the heavily loaded shallop in which they were disembarking was almost drawn under by the suction of a larger vessel.

About two hundred miles up the St. Lawrence, they came to the little trading post of Tadoussac, where they had their first contact with the inhabitants of the New World. As the ships anchored in the little harbor with its swift running current, the religious were struck with a kind of awe at the vast and lonely land that lay

before them. Mountains rose up on both sides, making of the harbor a dark and secret place. Fir and birch trees grew almost to the edge of the water, and in place of the vegetation they expected there was nothing but rocks and sand with tiny spruce trees struggling for existence. Everything that grew at Tadoussac had to struggle to survive, including those colonists who in 1600 had been the first white men to attempt a permanent settlement. Under the leadership of Pierre Chauvin, admittedly more interested in trading than colonization, they had made their headquarters in the little cove while they roved the countryside in search of beaver pelts. Toward late summer Chauvin filled his ship, *Le Don-de-Dieu*, with furs and started on his homeward voyage leaving behind sixteen colonists to weather the winter months. They had no shelter but a small frame structure which Champlain, contemptuous of the folly of the whole venture, later called a "summer house." Famine, cold, disease were no more powerful enemies than the terror and loneliness which gripped the remnant of the expedition. Ignorant of how to find food, of how to stay warm, of how to travel through the white drifts that blinded their eyes and snared their feet, they were soon a prey to the listlessness of despair. Even the help provided by friendly Indians could not rouse them, and when Chauvin's ship returned in the spring there were left but three of the original sixteen. It was not until seventeen years later that this spot resumed its important role in the colonization of New France. This time it was Champlain himself who brought it into prominence. On June 14, 1617, accompanied by two Récollet Fathers, Joseph le Caron and Paul Huet, and that first of Canadian settlers, Louis Hébert, with his wife and three children, Champlain dropped anchor in the harbor of what he persisted in calling "the most disagreeable and barren place in the whole country."³ On that same day Father Paul Huet celebrated the first Mass ever to be offered at Tadoussac. Gabriel Sagard-Théodet, also a Récollet, wrote describing this event:

Father Paul remained at Tadoussac, where he celebrated Holy Mass for the first time in a chapel constructed with the help of the sailors and Captain Morel with the most convenient branches and foliage. During the Holy Sacrifice two men decently dressed stood on each side with a branch in their hands for chasing the mosquitoes and gnats which plagued the priest, who would have

gone blind or else had to stop the Mass if it were not for this easy remedy.

At the same time, Captain Morel fired the guns from the shore as an act of thanksgiving for having had Holy Mass here where it had never been celebrated before. After all the devotions were finished, he asked everyone—Protestant as well as Catholic—to dinner so that the body as well as the spirit might be in festive mood. After dinner we returned to chapel to chant solemn Vespers, so that in a single day this poor desert was transformed into a little paradise where the divine praises echoed to heaven where formerly one had heard only the sounds of beasts.⁴

In the years that followed, the small chapel built so hastily continued to survive the elements and to serve the post that had changed so little in the intervening years. One could hardly call it a colony even now, for the few white men who made it their home were traders rather than colonists. Basically it still retained its original features of a convenient place for neighboring Indians to gather and exchange their furs for the intriguing barter provided by the French. During the summer months its transient population often bulged, and long before they reached land the excited religious could make out the dense rows of Indians that lined the shore. The men were tall and well formed; and there was little of their excellent physique which was not immediately apparent, for in summer they cast aside their cloaks of fur and skins in favor of the barest essentials of dress. If French sensibility was inclined to be squeamish, it had little time in which to indulge itself, for shocks and surprises followed thick upon each other. At first they found it difficult to distinguish the features of their hosts for the paint with which they were adorned. Father Le Jeune but a short time before had described in amazement a savage whom he met at Tadoussac: "His nose, the space around his eyes and his eyebrows were painted blue; his cheeks were black; and the rest of his face was done in red."⁵ As one trader commented, they were sometimes so painted that they actually looked dressed. In addition, their chests and backs and even their faces seemed alive with the tattooed figures of snakes and dragons and bears. The religious noted with some relief that the women were far more modestly dressed than the men. Their loose-fitting dress falling just below their knees had little of elegance about it except for

its removable sleeves, which were often elaborately embroidered with porcupine quills and porcelain ornaments. They were obviously proud of their appearance and particularly of their coiffures and the ornaments which they wore about their necks. "The more the better" seemed to be the general motto, and Champlain had once commented of a young Indian demoiselle, "She must have had twelve pounds of porcelain on her."⁶ Things were not so very different from the Old World after all, thought the nuns.

They were conducted to the little Indian village built on elevated ground and, as was the custom, surrounded by a palisade. Here they found the women busy at work, sewing with their primitive bone needles and thread made from animal sinews, making the crimson paint of which the warriors were so fond, drying their grain on the elevated tables made of sturdy branches and skins. Here too they saw their first Indian papoose, his smooth copper skin well greased with oil, as he lay in his strange little upright cradle which one Frenchman in admiration described as "very pretty and so convenient."⁷ It consisted of one or two pieces of thin wood about two and a half feet long, with edges elaborately decorated and ends narrowed and curved. Soft fur was placed upon the wood, and on this the child was laid. His covers, generally fur or some lighter material for summer, were placed about him and fastened by cords of strong leather. This whole contraption was placed in an upright position from which the sturdy Indian could survey his world.

The nuns say little of the hospitality extended to them while they remained at Tadoussac; perhaps the virtue of gratitude restrained them, but Father Gabriel Sagard suffered from no such scruple, and while he admired much that he saw, he was not slow in admitting that he found their eating habits "disgusting to the nth degree."⁸ Having in his thirst asked for a drink of water, he found that thirst was far less painful than the agony of drinking out of a vessel so dirty that it made him sick merely to look at it.

During the twelve days they remained at Tadoussac the religious had ample opportunity to clarify their attitudes about what evangelization of the Indians would entail. As they watched the children, spoiled and undisciplined, they began to understand more clearly why the Jesuits had sighed for nuns to come to help them.

This unexpected delay of almost two weeks was occasioned by the decision of the captains that the *Amiral* should remain at Tadoussac while the *St. Jacques* would continue the westward trip to Quebec. However, the captain of the *St. Jacques* had begun the construction of a long boat and thus informed his passengers that he would not set sail until this was completed. Although the religious were glad to have this opportunity for getting acquainted with their new world, nevertheless, they found the delay irksome. Finally, to their great joy they were able to get passage on a small boat headed for Quebec. Of this last fragment of their long journey, one of the religious of the Hôtel Dieu wrote:

The delay wearied us greatly, for we wished with all our hearts to behold our promised land. This is why, having hailed a small boat bound for Quebec, we begged the commander to take us with him. To this he kindly consented, first having pointed out to us all the discomfort we should experience aboard so small a vessel; but nothing seemed hard to us provided he could arrange to transport us to the land of our desire. And so we moved into this small ship where there was nowhere but the deck to accommodate us, every other place being filled with cod fish, which smelled horrible. During the few days and nights that we spent there, we suffered a great deal from want. As we had no bread, we were obliged to collect the leavings from the store-room, where we found more rats' droppings than biscuit crumbs. We took the trouble to sift out enough, however, to form one loaf, which we ate with dry cod, raw, as we had no means of cooking it. They gave us also some sort of very hard samphire, which is to be found along the river banks. All this tastes very good to hungry people.⁹

Thus they made their last days' journey up that dangerous stretch of the St. Lawrence, treacherous with hidden shoals and rocks. They were sure that by July 31, feast of the Jesuit founder, Ignatius of Loyola, they would reach Quebec at last. But even at the end one final disappointment awaited them. Within miles of Quebec the wind failed them and they sat helplessly becalmed looking longingly at the four miles which separated them from their new home.

Continuing her account, the Hôtel Dieu nun wrote:

At last, on July 31, we really hoped to reach Quebec, but the tide ran against us and the wind was not sufficiently favorable. We were forced to wait until the next day, and as the place was beautiful and the landing easy, we went ashore at the Island of Orleans, which at that time was totally uninhabited. We constructed huts after the manner of the Indians, the nuns occupying one, the priests another, and the sailors a third. Our happiness was inexpressible at finding ourselves in these great woods which echoed to the hymns we sang, pouring out a thousand praises to God, who had led us to this peaceful spot.

The Ile d'Orléans had always seemed like a magic land to the explorers coming upon it for the first time. Perhaps its charm lay in the fact that, as Champlain noted, it was so much like the lands of France. The green meadows which bordered its north side, the abundant springs and rivulets which bounded up everywhere, the luxuriant vines with their burden of wild grapes—these were like memories of the homeland come to haunt them in their exile. Even that redoubtable man of the seas, Jacques Cartier, seems to have fallen under its spell; for when he came to select its name, he found that no ordinary one would do; in a moment of intoxication—spiritual if not physical—he cried, "This is the Island of Bacchus."¹⁰ By the time of Champlain, however, this island, eighteen miles long and three miles wide, had received the official title of the Island of Orleans. Although it was still unsettled in 1639, it was actually the possession of Jacques Castillon, who the year before had established it as his seigneurie by the usual method of breaking a few branches and tearing up some grass. Once this symbolic action was completed, the owner apparently never troubled his possession again.

Early on the morning of August 1, the group of sailors and religious prepared to embark for the last few miles of their journey; but they, like Cartier before them, also fell under the Bacchic exuberance. In a burst of good spirits they let off several volleys from their guns and set fires going along the shore to announce the good tidings of their arrival to the expectant city of Quebec. The Governor, advised of the news, sent out his own shallop to meet the religious and bring them to Quebec.

The settlement which was about to welcome them was, even after thirty years of colonization, but sparsely settled. The French

population ranged between two hundred and fifty and three hundred people, hardly enough to dispel the feeling of solitude engendered by the vast reaches of forest all around them. It had not been an easy country to settle; the long, frozen winters, the constant peril of Indians, the difficulties of cultivation were enough to drive many of the first settlers back to their native France. As early as 1541 Cartier and Roberval had landed at Quebec with the express purpose of colonization. In his initial enthusiasm Cartier wrote that it was the loveliest land in the world; but their efforts to subjugate the elements failed and by the end of the first winter more than one fifth of the original number had died. The first project had failed and the next fifty years were spent in waiting; but despite their apparent failure, these first efforts were not wasted: Frenchmen had heard the name of Canada, and the hope of making it someday a new France never died in their hearts.

Reflecting on these silent years, a contemporary historian notes:

While waiting for the sky to clear, the crosses which Cartier had planted kept their silent guard. They reigned over the gray rocks of the savage northern coast at the point where Gaspé faced the sea, at Stadacona, and on the sandy borders of St. Maurice. They extended their arms to the sky as a call and as a promise.¹¹

The man who was to bring the promise to fulfillment was Samuel Champlain. It was he who succeeded in setting up the political and social structure of the colony, who convinced such families as the Héberts, Couillards, Hubous to remain as permanent settlers, who brought the Récollets and Jesuit Fathers to attend to the needs of the colonists as well as to take first steps towards the Christianization of the savages. These were hard years, years of hesitation and reversal, when the number of Frenchmen never rose above a hundred. Twenty-three years passed and only three marriages and eight births had been recorded in the Quebec register. But Champlain, with the resourceful determination so characteristic of him, continued to formulate his ideas. In 1616, Father Le Caron and Champlain held a council composed of both priests and laymen to discuss the needs of their adopted country. With the realism born of experience, they admitted that the initial

docility of the Indians meant very little in terms of actual conversion; the Church, they felt, would never be successfully established among these people unless steps were taken to change their nomadic life to a sedentary pattern. One step toward such a goal would be the construction of a seminary where at least the children could be brought to a daily system of disciplined instruction. Further, they hoped to build other small French villages along the St. Lawrence and to insure that future colonists would all belong to the Roman Catholic faith.

No sooner was their policy formulated than Champlain, accompanied by Fathers Le Caron and Huet, boarded ship for France. But if they had expected their ideas to gain an easy victory, they were mistaken. The businessmen, those wealthy and hardheaded overseas merchants, on whose policies the colony was dependent, had but a single interest: profitable trade. With single-minded brutality, the Christianization of the Indians, the security of the colonists, the successful cultivation of the soil were all brushed aside. And Champlain turned away, weary and frustrated, but not discouraged. Perhaps he could gain from the King what he could not gain from the merchant. The letter which he addressed to Louis XIII in 1618 expressed with simple and forceful sincerity what he conceived to be the basis for any colonization of Canada, "What has sustained us in the long and painful hardships of the last fifteen years has been our hope of planting the standard of the cross in this country and in teaching its meaning to these poor wretches [the Indians]."¹² What he asked for in effect was the means to implement the commission which had been given him by Henry IV in 1612.

Little by little Champlain got his way. Several more Récollet Fathers arrived to help with the evangelization, sponsored by funds provided by the French clergy. They set to work at the trading posts at Tadoussac and Three Rivers, soon penetrating even farther into Huron country. Exhilarated by his success, Champlain's visionary eyes saw the birth of an empire. Standing on the promontory overlooking the St. Lawrence, he saw a New France take root and blossom before his eyes. The few wooden buildings which composed his "Habitation" expanded into a great city; his roughly clad and underfed followers became the glorious ancestors of a vast progeny already stirring in the

womb of this primeval land. With his vision fresh and clear, he sat down to write once more to Louis XIII. This little post of Quebec, he wrote, will soon become a city of grandeur and splendor resembling St. Denis. First among its beauties will be a church dedicated to God under the title "The Redeemer," for it will call to mind the mercy and blessings of salvation bestowed upon this pagan land. Would it please His Royal Majesty to accept the dedication of this city to his royal person and thus permit Champlain to rename it "Ludovica" or "St. Louis?" His Royal Majesty, however, never deigned to answer; and while Champlain maintained his vision, he never attempted to change the name of his colony.¹³

In 1620, however, part of his dream came true: that year he brought with him on his return from France his young and beautiful wife. Although H  l  ne Boull   had been married to Champlain for ten years, she was at her arrival in Canada only twenty-two. The marriage of this twelve-year-old child to the experienced explorer could hardly have been based on love; neither, however, must we assume that Champlain's motive was solely that of acquiring H  l  ne's substantial fortune. It was, it is true, an "arranged" marriage—but then, most seventeenth-century marriages were. That these two grew to love each other during their four years spent together at Quebec is obvious proof. His joyful pride at her arrival, her persistent efforts to adjust her sensitive and delicate temperament to the horrors of pioneer existence are surely proof of that effort to please which love produces.

When he had first broached to her his desire that she should one day accompany him to his new land, she found his enthusiasm contagious. She would be the Governor's lady—the First Lady in every sense of the word. She would be a kind of empress in a new world. And she, lady to her fingertips, began to prepare herself for her new role. Even her terror of the sea was calmed by the glorious dreams and hopes her bearded husband laid at her feet. In July of 1620 their boat dropped anchor in the harbor which Champlain had called "the most beautiful spot in the world," and the Governor and his First Lady made their way along the wharf. There was neither horse nor carriage, banner nor procession to welcome the first Governor of the new land

into his kingdom. The elegant coiffure and rich dress which Madame Champlain had donned for the occasion seemed strangely out of place as they struggled up the steep path to the Upper Town.

Here she found the Governor's residence: a poor wooden building whose windows had fallen out, whose doors hung loose on their hinges and whose floors slanted at a dangerous angle. Even Champlain was chagrined at the deterioration that had taken place during his months of absence. He wrote, "I found this settlement of ours in fact in such an abandoned and ruinous condition that I felt grieved. The rain was coming in everywhere; the wind blew through all the crevices."¹⁴ That for four years H  l  ne Boull   stayed on to share her husband's destiny says much for her fortitude and her devotion. During the cold eternity of winter she studied Algonquin, and in the spring she gathered the Indians about her to teach them the fundamentals of the catechism. They loved her, we are told, and found her so beautiful that she had difficulty in keeping them from worshiping her as a divinity come to earth. At her waist she kept a tiny mirror—as was the custom of the day—and the Indians were astonished to find their own faces mirrored in its depths. That this beautiful lady would always keep all their pictures so close to her heart must mean that she loved them greatly, and they were deeply touched.

By 1624, however, both husband and wife recognized that she could not endure the rigors exacted by Canada; and when Champlain took her back for a visit to France, they realized that she would never return. It was an older and more sober woman who resumed her place in Parisian society. For the next eleven years she continued her ordinary life of social obligation and charitable enterprise. When news of her husband's death reached her in 1636, she announced her plans to enter an Ursuline convent, a plan which she had cherished for a number of years. There she remained while the Ursulines set sail for New France; and as they adjusted themselves to pioneer existence, no one in all the world understood so well what they were enduring as the superior of the Ursuline convent at Meaux who fifteen years before had been the First Lady of Canada.¹⁵

In the years following Madame Champlain's return to France,

her husband could count both gain and loss. The Mission of Notre Dame des Anges flourished under the direction of the Récollets. It was the first two-story building the Indians had ever seen, and they were wide-eyed with admiration. Four years after its erection, however, the cross took on new and immediate reality when word reached Quebec that Father Le Caron, with whom Champlain had worked so closely, had been treacherously murdered by the Indians. New France had its first martyr. It would not be long, moreover, until the tree of the cross would be in full flower.

In 1627, the French fleet, loaded with provisions for New France, was captured by the English in the St. Lawrence. Grateful that Quebec itself had not been taken by the invader, the colonists set about to live on scarce rations for the ensuing year. By mid-winter the storehouses were empty, and by spring even the edible roots and wild nuts had been exhausted. Then Champlain attempted to bargain with the Hurons for a supply of grain that would tide them over until the French fleet arrived. It was a ragged and spiritless population that heard on July 19 that once again English ships had been sighted in the St. Lawrence and that this time they were headed straight for Quebec. The conclusion was inevitable: Champlain acceded to the terms offered him and Quebec bowed before English rule. Nobody could then see how short-lived British supremacy in Canada would be; and Champlain, defeated and impoverished, returned disconsolate to France.

Despite the various changes in the personnel governing colonial affairs, the years between the founding of Quebec in 1608 and its surrender in 1628 were singularly bleak. Lucrative trade was the only thing that had mattered to the various companies which had charge of the colony, and whatever advances had been made in solid colonization and Christianization had been accomplished through the personal initiative of Champlain himself. Although the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye restored Canada to France, it by no means solved the various political and economic problems which beset the rugged little colony. In 1633, Champlain the indomitable returned to the scene more determined than ever to carry out his dream. The quality of his enthusiasm and idealism was contagious; and despite difficulties

which would have seemed invincible to a man of lesser stature, Quebec began to rise according to the image of his dream. Missionaries once more set off into Indian territory; friendly relations were set up with neighboring tribes, and far-reaching invitations were sent to the Indians to come to Quebec to barter their furs. Best of all, new recruits came to settle permanently, doubling the population within a few years. The labor of thirty years had found its reward at last; but before he could enjoy the full flowering of the colony he had built so lovingly, Champlain died. On a bleak Christmas Day in 1635, Quebec—silent and sorrowful—learned of the loss of its founder and father.

Charles Jacques de Montmagny succeeded Champlain as Governor of New France, and it was he who stood on the quay to welcome the missionaries from the Old World. Quebec had seen vast improvements in the last six years, but it was still closer in size and spirit to a trading post than to a cultivated town. It was a hardy population that lined the wharves that morning of August 1, 1639. All work was thrown aside as young and old peered eagerly to catch a glimpse of these first nuns to set foot in the New World. Soon there would be a hospital for their sick and a school for their children. Quebec was growing in stature; it was becoming a city like those they had known in France with the advantages for mind and body which they had so sorely missed.

Pioneer life left little time for the elegances of formal schooling; yet these colonists, with their family pride and love of tradition, wanted their children to miss none of the opportunities which they would have had in the mother country. Although it is impossible to determine how many of the first colonists were able to read or write, it is not difficult to determine what they demanded for their heirs. Since the preponderance of the Quebec population was, at this time, of Norman origin, the emphasis on education ran particularly high, for the Normans had always maintained a fairly high level of elementary education. Now at last their dream was to be fulfilled. No wonder that there was a shout of joy as the nuns stepped from the shallop onto Canadian soil; no wonder, too, that there was a moment of respectful silence as they knelt to kiss the ground of this land which was now their home.¹⁶ Almost spontaneously a procession formed, led by

the Governor, taking the new arrivals to Notre Dame de Recouvrance. Up the "Royal Mile" the procession wended, that precipitous path leading from the King's Wharf to the Place d'Armes and over which so many famous feet would pass. Up it had traveled Cartier accompanied by Donnaconna, that tragic savage who, though King of Canada, died a lonely and unwilling exile in the bewildering luxury of a France he never understood. This was the path of Champlain as he trudged to the Upper Town with his legendary dog Sailor trotting at his heels. And in Quebec's later years it would bear the gaily booted feet of such Governors as De Courcelle and De Mézy with their elegant entourages. Now, however, it was a plainly garbed Governor who led the way, for De Montmagny's greatness lay not in the richness of his apparel but in the magnificence of his spiritual stature. That he could follow so closely in the footsteps of the beloved Champlain and still win the hearts of the colonists is, perhaps, his greatest title to glory. Soldier and administrator, he was a devout Christian as well; and if that later historian Francis Parkman is correct in calling him a "religious fanatic," his was a fanaticism that boded well for the country he governed.¹⁷

When the procession reached the parish church, situated for safety close to the ramparts of the fort, it halted and, once inside the church, the clergy intoned the *Te Deum*, that solemn hymn of thanksgiving in praise of the God of power and mercy.

When the ceremony was over, the congregation assembled in the square around the church to welcome individually the religious who had come to share their lives; and for the first time Marie was at liberty to study the faces of the colonists who formed the nucleus of New France. First among them were those who having come out with Champlain as early as 1617 had weathered the storm of English occupation and were waiting on the promontory to welcome the French ships when they returned three years later. Prominent among these was the widow of Louis Hébert, who had been present at the first Mass at Tadoussac, and Abraham Martin, whose name has been immortalized in that grant of land now called "The Plains of Abraham." The former had already become a legend in New France, for after her husband's death in 1627 she kept her farm going and refused

to budge even for the dreaded Redcoats. Some years later she remarried and was now known to the colony as Madame Hubou. No trouble could remain hidden from her keen and compassionate eyes, and in later years she found herself in the role of grandmother to the entire colony. No one, it seemed, was ever turned away from her door; and her household numbered not only destitute Indian waifs but a little black boy as well—left there by the English when they departed. When some drunken Indians killed her cattle and pulled up her fruit trees—the only ones existing in the New World—she simply started over again with the help of her son-in-law Guillaume Couillard, whom her husband had admired so much that he gave him his dearest treasure, his eldest daughter Marie. Now she stood before Notre Dame de la Recouvrance in matriarchal splendor, surrounded by her children and grandchildren, promising that all the little ones would go to the Ursuline school and announcing proudly that she was expecting another grandchild any day.¹⁸ Another matriarchal figure also had her place in the crowd; this was Madame de Repentigny who, although in her seventies, had seen no reason why she could not come to Canada with her two sons, Pierre and Charles, both of whom were to become important figures in the new colony. There, too, was the reserved but imposing figure of the Sieur de Gand who, sent out in 1634 as Commissioner General of the Company of New France, was to give invaluable help to the Jesuits until his untimely death in 1641. Among the more diffident figures in the crowd were Jean and Jean Paul Godefroy, formerly Champlain's interpreters among the Indians, whose daughters were one day to be numbered among the first Canadian Ursulines.¹⁹ The Piverts, Desportes, Duchesnes—all of whom were to contribute pupils to the incipient school—came in their turn to offer their smiles and bows of welcome.

The quality of the welcome more than made up for the hardships they had endured, and the nuns found it hard to control their emotions as family after family came to thank them, to welcome them, to assure them of their assistance. Like all strangers in a foreign land, they found the newness wonderfully exciting; and they forgot their fatigue as they walked through the streets, missing no detail of the style of architecture, the dress and manners

of the people. Close to the church they noticed some familiar objects: a pillory with chain and iron collar, a wooden horse—customary device for punishing minor offenses—and beside them a placard warning against drunkenness, blasphemy, and neglect of Mass. Crimes in the early colony were few, possibly because of the severity of the punishment. A man who had eaten meat during Lent without permission was tied for three hours to the public stake in the cold of winter; habitual blasphemy was rewarded with branding with the fleur-de-lis; and incorrigible swearing by the loss of one's tongue. Later the nuns would have to comfort hysterical children coming unawares upon the dead body of a criminal left swinging in an iron cage at the top of Cape Diamond. Quebec in those early days left little room for anything but virtuous living, for the combined arms of church and state exerted an imponderable force.

But grim thoughts such as these had no place on such a festive occasion, and no sooner had the colonists completed their greeting than De Montmagny led the newcomers to Fort St. Louis. Dinner that day was to be at the Governor's residence amid all the panoply that he could muster for the occasion.

It was well into the afternoon when the festivities were concluded and the two groups of nuns parted. It was a strained moment, for they had formed those strong bonds which mutual endurance and privation forge so well. They had shared so much, these six pioneers, experiences and hopes and fears which set them apart with a special seal. This moment would not happen again. Other missionaries would come, it is true, but there would be a difference. The first time can happen only once. The Ursulines were led back toward the St. Lawrence while the Hôtel Dieu nuns were guided toward their house in the Upper Town. It was a rented house, recently built, and provided for them by their patroness, Madame Aiguillon. From the outside it looked quite prepossessing with its four good-sized rooms; but as they were shown inside, they were hard pressed to contain their chagrin. The annalist, later describing these first difficult minutes, wrote:

We were taken there early in the day and found four lovely rooms and two closets, but the only furniture consisted simply of a kind of table—or rather a piece of board upheld by four

sticks—and two benches constructed in the same way. Nevertheless, we valued all of these things very much. The Ursuline Mothers were brought to a little house on the edge of the river, where they were very crowded.²⁰

Cramped indeed they were to be, and although they had imaginatively conceived all manner of hardships in this rude, pioneer country to which they were come, the small, ill-built cabin which was to be both convent and school provided an unexpected shock: two rooms, each about sixteen feet square.²¹ This was home. They smiled, thanked their guides, assured them that they would be quite comfortable, and bid them good-by. Outside there was the steady lapping of waves against the wharves; inside there was silence—the silence of dedication as the missionaries penetrated more deeply into the mystery of their vocation. Of those first few hours the convent annalist wrote:

Following this they were conducted with the same ceremony to the several dwellings which had been prepared for them. . . . The Ursulines were brought to a very small house, a kind of store belonging to *Sieur Juchereau des Châtelets*, situated at the foot of the path leading to the mountain, not far from the place where the church of the Lower City was erected. It is said that the Governor sent them their first supper. As for their beds, they consisted simply of spruce branches, for since the heavy baggage had been left at Tadoussac and the small things had not yet been unloaded, the Ursulines found themselves without beds or furniture or provisions.²²

The following day they were not permitted the luxury of getting settled, for the Jesuit Fathers wanted them to see the Indian mission at Sillery before the bounds of their cloister were established. The Mission of St. Joseph at Sillery, located only a few miles from Quebec, had, under the direction of Father Le Jeune, made significant strides. In addition to the priests' residence, there were houses for the neophytes, a small fort, and a chapel. About twenty-five Algonquin families had settled here, forming what was hoped to be the nucleus of a sedentary Indian community. Fathers Vimont and Le Jeune looked on proudly while their first Christians welcomed with grateful joy these nuns who would teach their daughters and prepare them for their roles in the Christian community. Madame de la Peltrie was

radiant at the greetings extended to them and hugged the shy little Indian girls, who were bewildered at this unaccustomed display of emotion. Marie, although less demonstrative, found her heart swelling with gratitude and enthusiasm at what had been accomplished: "It seems," she wrote later, "that the fervor of the primitive Church has shifted to New France."

Mother St. Croix, writing later to her superior at Dieppe, describes the thrill of finding themselves at last among those people for whose salvation they had consecrated themselves:

They baptized there a little girl of about ten; Madame de la Peltre was her godmother and she was called Marie. She was given to us as a boarder—our first one! You can imagine the joy of being able to carry out our vocation on the second day of our arrival toward this little girl just newly baptized. Many of those present cried for joy during the ceremony. Before beginning, Father Le Jeune had the savages, who were seated on benches, pray in their own language. . . . I find nothing more pleasing than the singing of these savages. They sing sweetly and keep together very well. I admire the charity of this devoted Father who takes the trouble to sing along with them. . . . He is a real apostle in this country and a true father to the savages.²³

Before they left the mission the Indian captain had promised to send his daughter to them, and Father Le Jeune estimated that they could count on at least half a dozen other Indian children. Their apostolate had begun!

Gratified by the reactions of the nuns to the mission at Sillery, the Fathers insisted that Wednesday be spent in visiting the largest and most important of the Canadian missions, that of Notre Dame des Anges, less than two miles outside of Quebec. It was a spot rich in memories, for the Jesuits had built only a few hundred steps from the original mission set up by the Récollet Fathers in 1621. Once again came the thrill of expectation which had so filled their spirits at Sillery.

The following day, accompanied by De Montmagny, they went to the Upper City to look at a spot which the Governor suggested for the erection of their permanent monastery. They agreed that the spot seemed ideal, close enough to the fort for protection, and far enough from the river to avoid the dampness

which they had already experienced during their few days in the Lower City.

At last they were free to spend time on cleaning, unpacking, and making plans for the best use of their narrow quarters. One room, they decided, would have to serve as dormitory, refectory, and choir, and when necessary a parlor. The other room could serve for the children's classes and also as a kitchen. Since not even the most careful organization could provide room for a chapel and sacristy, they decided to build a little annex, a small shedlike structure, little resembling the churches they were used to but the best they could manage under the circumstances. This addition was so small that it could contain only the altar and the priest with his server. It was hardly an elegant establishment, but with youthful optimism Mother St. Croix wrote, "We have the most beautiful view in the world; without stepping out of our house we can watch the ships arrive, and for the whole time that they remain in the harbor they are anchored right in front of our convent."²⁴

By Saturday, August 6, feast of the Transfiguration, they were ready to establish their permanent cloister. In place of the high walls customarily used to mark off the limits of the enclosure, they used large cedar stakes which served the purpose equally well. Although the religious would observe the rules of strict cloister as far as going out was concerned, the rule was mitigated to provide for the entrance of all those children or adults who would present themselves for purposes of instruction.

On Sunday, August 7, the Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for the first time in their improvised chapel, and that afternoon in festive mood they sang Vespers: Marie and Mother St. Croix serving as first choir, and Mother St. Joseph, Madame de la Peltrie and Charlotte Barré forming the second. A violin accompaniment was added as a special feature to attract the Indians. It is again Mother St. Croix who provides the best description of those early religious ceremonies:

That Sunday we had Mass in our house; we had it every day in the same place—a little corner near the chimney sealed off with boards. There is just enough room for the altar, the priest, and his server. Thus we have the privilege of having Our Lord very near, to whom we can tell all our needs. . . . Everyone

is delighted with the nuns' singing. On feast days and on Sundays all the townspeople come to listen to the singing of Vespers. It is amusing to watch the savages when we play the violin. We use it, of course, only to attract the Indians. Many of them are being baptized—adults as well as children. Since our arrival Father Le Jeune baptized seven in one night. However, at the moment there is a contagious disease among them which is like a kind of smallpox. . . .

Less than a week later, on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all Quebec took part in a religious and patriotic procession celebrating the birth of an heir to the French throne. Although the Dauphin, one day to become Louis XIV, had been born almost a year before, news of his birth had not reached Canada until the arrival of the summer fleet. The preceding year, an Indian had been sent to the royal court to pay homage to the King from all the savages of New France and as a gesture of benevolence—a gesture typical in its impracticality—Louis XIII bestowed upon him several complete court costumes. They were magnificent things of satin and velour and cloth of gold. In awe and admiration the Indians ran their hands over the priceless fabrics, wondering to whose lot it would fall to be covered with such brilliance. A half-dozen exemplary savages were chosen for the honor; on the feast of the Assumption the royal garments were slipped over the figures of six naked and well-greased Indians, who strutted with more than usual hauteur as they assumed the first place in the procession, trailing satin fleur-de-lis. The Indians from Sillery had also been invited to participate, and under the eyes of the punctilious Father Le Jeune they comported themselves with laudable dignity. Writing later for the *Jesuit Relations*, their spiritual father proudly described the ceremony:

Behind the new Christians, who walked two by two very sedately, came Madame de la Peltrie, the foundress of the Ursulines, with three or four little Indian girls at her side, all dressed in the French manner. Following them were all the other Indian girls and women dressed in their own costume and keeping perfectly the place assigned to them. We proceeded to the hospital, where all the savages knelt on our side, the French on the other, and the clergy in the middle. Then all our Christians

prayed together for the King, thanking God that He had given him a son; they prayed also for the Queen, for the French, and for their own people. Leaving the hospital, we went in the direction of the Ursulines; as we passed in front of the fort, the gunners fired a well-executed salute and the cannon redoubled their lightning and thunder. At the Ursulines we observed the same ceremonies as before; the religious sang the *Exaudiat*. The Indians were touched and our French delighted at seeing these two choirs of virgins singing the wonders of God in this new world.²⁵

That night the customary bonfire, sign of joy and festivity, was held. From their tiny home, the Ursulines watched the lurid cast of the fire against the sky. Their first big feast day in the New World was over; and in the quiet hours of the evening, with the restful sound of the river lapping against the wharf, it was hard not to wander back in memory to the security of a past which seemed so ordered, so sure, compared to the confused and uncertain living in this barbarous country. Instead of the methodical life of their French convents, they found their days pulled into shreds by the unexpected. And sometimes when night closed in, a night darker and more ominous than any they had experienced in France, it was hard not to be gripped by a formless terror engendered by the very vastness of the land which surrounded them. Happily, however, there was little time for revery in their busy days, and discouragement was pushed aside by the needs of the moment.

Smallpox, the contagious disease which Mother St. Croix had mentioned almost casually in her letter of September 2, soon became one of the most terrifying aspects of the nuns' first year on the Canadian Mission. It was not the first epidemic; one had occurred in 1637, and the Jesuits remembered all too well the consequences upon their work. The savages with their superstitious belief in demons were sure that the cause lay in the evil magic of the Black Robes, who expected each day to meet death at the hands of the terrified and angry Indians. So sure were they that their lives were at an end that they wrote to Father Le Jeune, their superior at Quebec, expressing their gratitude and joy at this chance of "shedding our blood and sacrificing our lives for our Master, Jesus Christ." One of the signatures

was that of Jean de Brébeuf who, twelve years later, would see fulfilled his desire for martyrdom. However, when the plague finally abated, so did the hostility of the Indians, and the Jesuits were once more able to continue their evangelization. It was inevitable that under such conditions the nuns themselves should fall ill; and when they did, the indefatigable Jesuits took over the work of the hospital. While the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu were undoubtedly grateful for their assistance, they were somewhat chagrined when they were able to return to their duties to see the state of their house. The annalist wrote tersely: "They found a typical man's household: not very clean and in great disorder."²⁶

The crowded little house on the St. Lawrence had also been turned into a hospital, and the Ursulines, although not trained in nursing, did their best to alleviate the sufferings of the poor savages who were brought to them. The two small rooms were filled with homemade pallets, and the small supply of linen which the nuns possessed was torn into bandages to cover the ugly wounds which formed on every portion of the plague-stricken bodies. Writing later to Claude, Marie notes:

This little house was soon turned into a hospital because of the smallpox which broke out among the savages. As we had not yet any furniture, all the beds were on the floor and in such great quantity that we had to step over the beds of the sick. Three or four of our little girls died. The Divine Majesty gave such fervor and courage to my Sisters that they never felt the slightest disgust at the dirt and filthiness of the Indians. Our foundress always wanted the first opportunity to help, and although she was of a very delicate constitution, she always busied herself in the humblest jobs.

Once the smallpox epidemic abated, the religious were able to begin on the work which had brought them to Canada, the instruction of both French and Indian children. Both the Hospital nuns and the Ursulines had already realized that they must somehow conquer the weird guttural sounds of the Indian tongues. Father Vimont, recently appointed Superior General of the Jesuits in Canada, designated Father Le Jeune as their instructor. He began them on the study of Algonquin, the language of the Indians of Sillery. He was a thorough master if not

an easy one. He soon proved that his reputation for missing no detail was based on fact. Word by word, through laborious and painstaking repetition, they learned the intricacies of this foreign tongue, using the dictionary which Le Jeune himself had prepared. Even Marie with her indomitable courage admits that she often came close to despair in her daily battle with this primitive language:

Since it was more than twenty years since I had done anything that smacks of study, at first this effort to master a language which was so totally different from ours made my head ache; it seemed to me that learning all these words by heart, as well as memorizing all the different forms of the verbs (for we study everything by rule) was like having stones rolling around in my head. The whole thing seemed to me humanly impossible.

Between the care of the sick and the daily hours of language study, there was little time for writing letters to France. When in mid-September the fleet began preparations for the homeward voyage, the newcomers, realizing the anxiety of their families and friends, somehow found some time to scribble letters assuring everyone that they were fine. Marie's first letter was, of course, to Claude. There was so much to tell him: the embarkation, the trip itself, their first sight of Quebec, the many journeys of their first week, preparations for the building of a permanent monastery, and the beginnings of the smallpox epidemic, as well as those more personal details and questions which her mother's heart dictated.

It was a grave little group that stood at their windows watching the ships weigh anchor. With their departure, their last tie with the Old World was cut. They had not known what a solemn moment this was going to be; but as the last patch of sail disappeared eastward down the river, they realized that their commitment was now more irrevocable than ever. Yet with that awareness came one of those surges of pure joy, strong and unalloyed, which God sometimes in His mercy permits at the moment of sacrifice. A week or so before, Marie had written to her brother, "We are where we desire to be." And now as they turned from the window to face together the work and hardships of another day, they rejoiced that it was true.

CHAPTER 11

Despite the hardships and inconveniences of that first winter, they managed, somehow, to survive, and the late Canadian spring found them surprisingly vigorous. It was with an air of real triumph that Marie wrote to Mother Marie Gillette, a Visitandine of Tours:

We have passed the winter here as smoothly as in France; and although we were squeezed together in a little hole where there was no air, no one was sick, and I myself never felt so well. In France if we ate pork and salted fish the way we do here, we would all be sick or at least lose our voices; but here we manage very well and sing even better than we did in France. The air is really excellent. Actually this is a kind of earthly paradise where crosses and thorns grow so lovingly that the more one is pricked the more one's heart is filled with comfort. Beg Our Lord that He will give us the grace to love like this always.

It was not until years later that she was willing to admit the full weight of the hardships of that first year. Then she confided to Claude: "At the beginning we suffered so much—especially because of our poor housing—that it is extraordinary that we aren't all dead or at least permanent invalids."

By midwinter the smallpox had died out and the religious could begin their teaching in earnest. They had feared for a while that the epidemic might reduce their chances of acquiring Indian pupils; but despite the initial suspicion and hostility, the parents still wanted to send their children to the Ursulines. "If only we had had more provisions and clothing, we would have been able to take a great number," Marie wrote to a friend. And yet one wonders how any more little girls could have been accommodated in that crowded household. The beds had had to be arranged one above the other so that the top one could

be reached only by means of a makeshift ladder. Although Marie wrote that she had never been so happy, she admitted with her usual candor that they were painfully poor:

We brought with us clothing to last for two years and everything has already been used up this year. Not having anything else with which to clothe them, we have had to give them part of our own things. All the linens that our foundress had given us and part of the supply that our Mothers in France had sent us have likewise been used in tidying them up and dressing them. For us it has been a very moving consolation to take the bread from our own mouths to give it to these poor people, and thus to inspire them with a love of Our Saviour and our holy faith. . . . The expenses that one incurs in this tiny house are unbelievable and even so we are so poor that at night we can see the stars through the chinks in the roof—and as for keeping a candle lit, it is almost impossible because of the wind.

No wonder that all the letters of this period repeat the plea, "Should you meet any important persons, please recommend our needs to them."

Their boarders were not their only charges during that first winter; the old and sick among the savages, unable to go on the winter hunting expedition with their tribes, came to the Ursulines with touching confidence and primitive curiosity, believing that all their needs could be taken care of by these new Mothers from France. The nuns did their best, although it often meant their going without the bare necessities of food and clothing. They even managed on some important occasions to provide a feast in the Indian manner. The ingredients for this never ceased to horrify the nuns, and Marie describes it in detail in a letter to her brother Matthieu: "We use about a bushel of dried prunes, four loaves of bread weighing about six pounds each, a dozen tallow candles and two or three pounds of heavy lard, in order that everything be good and greasy. That's the way they like it!"¹

Meanwhile they continued their study of Huron and Algonquin. Nothing they had ever learned concerning Latin or French was of the slightest help to them, for the syntax of these primitive languages was based upon an entirely different habit of thought. Even their teacher, Father Le Jeune, had written but

a few years before, "They have such an enormous richness of expression that I sometimes feel I will never master the wealth of this language." Verbs with infinite numbers of forms made up the base of the language, and the slightest change of meaning involved a change in verb structure. Was the object of the verb singular or plural, was it animate or inanimate, was the action performed in the air or on the ground—all of this had to be determined before the proper form of the verb could be ascertained. No wonder a lesson in Algonquin was generally followed by a headache!

Despite their reputation for monosyllabic utterances, the Indians were in reality a talkative people. They liked to talk and they liked to talk well. They were proud of their language and of their ability to use it to its fullest. Skill in the art of declamation was considered an essential quality for a chief, and consequently boys were trained from early manhood to observe the pompous formalisms of council speech. Like most primitive peoples they held rigidly to the conventions of their language and admitted no variation to established rule—either by design or by error. Many a learned Jesuit had been laughed to silence around the Indian campfire, for the man who could not express himself well was considered of inferior degree. Father de Brébeuf in his advice to young aspirants to the missions, wrote tellingly:

You must be prepared, instead of the great master and theologian you have been in France, to be here a modest pupil—and then—good God! with what teachers!—women, little children, and all the savages; and you must be prepared to be exposed to their laughter. The Huron language will be your Saint Thomas and your Aristotle; and able man that you are and eloquent among learned and clever persons, you must make up your mind to be dumb for a long time among barbarians. It will be a great thing for you if you can begin to stammer at the end of a little time.²

It was Mother St. Joseph with her quick, youthful mind who made the greatest progress in the language. Marie, however, despite her initial difficulty, soon found herself able to express the essentials of the catechism in her adopted tongue. Writing to a friend in France, she commented wisely: "The desire to talk accomplishes a great deal," adding, "I want my tongue to be

able to express my heart so that I can tell these dear children about the love of God and of Jesus our Master."

"Docile, pious, affectionate," wrote Madame de la Peltrie in describing their Indian charges. Yet these charges had other characteristics as well, qualities which even the devotion of their teachers could not overlook. They were stubborn, undisciplined, and passionately freedom-loving. Jerome Lalemant, writing from the Huron Mission in 1639, listed the children as one of his gravest problems. "The freedom of the children in these countries is so great," he wrote, "and they prove so incapable of government and discipline, that, far from being able to hope for the conversion of the country through the instruction of the children, we must even despair of their instruction without the conversion of the parents."³

Pride was the dominant characteristic of the Indian—family pride, tribal pride, but most of all personal pride. Any constraint placed upon his liberty, any rebuke of his conduct was construed as an insult which could not be brooked. Such an attitude was engendered early in the children, so that even a five-year-old was permitted physical liberty to follow his infant caprices. An admission of guilt, a willingness to accept correction, an apology—these were for even the smallest Indian child signs of weakness which elicited only contempt. It was not long before the religious realized that the path of truthfulness, of respect for authority, and especially of humility was going to be a long and thorny one for their young charges.

However, these children had other qualities at which the nuns marveled. Chief among these was their ability to accept hardship without complaint. Among a people where the slightest expression of suffering was regarded with contempt, children were trained to endurance as soon as they could walk. At an age when French girls were content to luxuriate in the comforts of the family circle, these little Spartans entered contests to see how long they could keep burning coals steady upon their arms. Cold, fatigue, poor food—and sometimes no food at all—formed the warp and woof of their existence, and they found the poverty-stricken quarters offered to them by the nuns far more commodious than anything they had ever known. Yet this new and easier existence was not always enough to make them happy.

Sometimes as the wind brought the familiar sounds of the woodland through the cloister door, they grew sick with longing for the freedom of the forests; and then no bribe or punishment could keep them from slipping out beyond the constraining force of the palisade to the exhilarating liberty beyond.

Their temperament was not the only difficulty, however. The physical conditions in which they were used to living made dealing with them a problem. Even Marie's loving heart, which can overlook much, speaks of the "intolerable filth" in which these children are brought to them.

They are as naked as worms when they come to us, and we have to scrub them from head to foot because of the grease with which their parents have oiled their bodies. And no matter how thorough a job we do—and even though their underclothing and dresses are changed often, we cannot permanently rid them of the vermin, because of the grease that coats their bodies. One of our Sisters devotes a part of every day to this job. . . . Our foundress has been helping with it all year. Today it is Mother St. Joseph who has the happiness.

As the nuns set out to instruct them in the rudiments of seventeenth-century hygiene, their Indian charges were baffled. Looking at their shiny bodies they wondered how anyone could take exception to the coating of bear oil which their fathers and brothers had obtained amid the perils of the hunt. With some asperity they countered that they could find nothing very clean in the bushy beards by which the Frenchmen deformed themselves. Who, they asked, would ever give herself to a husband like that!

Their very real capacity for affection was the quality on which the nuns hoped to build. "When they are in trouble, they throw themselves into our arms as into a refuge," Marie told Father Le Jeune. Would it not be possible to turn this instinctive devotion to the person of Christ, reaching them through the simple spontaneity of their hearts? That first Christmas the nuns built a little crèche, and the fascinated children seemed never to tire of looking at the small image of the infant Jesus; often they came to the crib with pieces of lighted bark in their hands, since candles were luxuries that could not be afforded. Their primitive instinct delighted in statues and pictures, and one of their great-

est joys was to fix bouquets of wild flowers for the shrines of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

Madame de la Peltrie capitalized on their love of pretty things to begin her instructions in needlework, at which she herself was so adept. They were earnest and fairly skillful in this work, although they found it difficult to adjust from the coarse materials of deerskin and porcupine quills to the delicate materials of French silk and embroidery cotton. Very often Madame de la Peltrie discovered, however, that it was a full day's work simply to keep her undisciplined charges neatly dressed and relatively clean. The elegances of French schooling would have to wait.

Schooling in those days was a fairly simple matter, made simpler in New France by the lack of educational materials. When in later years Marie attempted to set down some idea of the curriculum, she wrote that the children were to be trained in "reading, writing, arithmetic, prayers, Christian customs, and everything that a woman ought to know." What in fact was actually taught seems to have been the rudiments of the three "R's" and an introduction to Christian living. Education could not be the leisurely thing that it was in France, for on the Canadian frontier children stayed in school but a short time—especially the Indian children, whose parents thought a year of schooling should turn out finished scholars.

The nuns must often have been amused as they recalled the directions found in contemporary pedagogical manuals: the classroom should never be too crowded; it should, whenever possible, have windows on three sides; chimneys should be arranged so that the children can keep warm; each child should have sufficient materials of instruction. Instead, they huddled their charges into a corner of a single room, bundled them in furs and skins to keep them warm, tried to keep them from choking on the chimney smoke that always came down instead of up, and were grateful that their house had any windows at all. But whatever they lacked in material advantages, they had in abundance that quality which Father de Brébeuf in a letter to the Jesuit General had named as essential for mission teaching: "Among the other qualities with which the laborer in this mission ought to shine, gentleness and patience hold the first place, and this field will never bear fruit except with love and patience."⁴

The children themselves seemed happy enough once they recovered from their initial attacks of homesickness. Life at the convent was exciting, despite its routine; lessons and prayers were a new adventure, and their native curiosity never tired of watching the nuns with their strange dress and stranger actions. With their well-trained powers of observation they missed nothing and soon imitated with amusing gravity all that they saw the religious doing. The nuns' devotions were one of the most fertile fields for imitation, and soon the astonished religious saw beguiling little figures in Indian moccasins and French pinafores solemnly reproducing the gestures and attitudes of the cloister. Although they must have been amused, they were delighted as well, hoping that this external performance would help to transform them interiorly.

The boarders' adjustment to Christian ceremonial was made easier by the fact that they had never been trained to a system of pagan worship. Although their lives had been surfeited with superstitions and spirit worship, they had little in the way of a developed ritual. Champlain, observing this, had commented sadly: "I asked them what kind of ceremonies they used in praying to their God; they told me there were none, but that each prayed in his heart just as he liked."⁵ Although Champlain felt that much of their immorality sprang from this lack of an established cult, the nuns now found that the Indian children were able to adjust to a Christian ritual without prejudice.

Mother St. Joseph, who had assumed the grandiloquent title of "Mistress of Boarders," loved every minute spent with her charges and wrote enthusiastically to Father Le Jeune:

They have a special inclination to prayer. . . . They beg us a hundred times a day to pray with them and to show them what they should do. . . . They assist at Mass every day and with such attention that we are amazed—neither fooling nor talking the way the children do in France. They fashion all their gestures on ours except that for their curtsies they imitate Madame de la Peltrie.

They never miss a day in saying their rosary, and whenever they notice one of the nuns leaving to say hers, they run after her to say it with her. They often slip into our choir and there, arranging themselves into groups and each holding a book in

her hand, they act as we do during Office. They sing the *Ave Maris Stella* and the *Gloria Patri*, making the same inclinations as they see us make. Since this is the only hymn they know by heart, they sing it twenty or thirty times without stopping, sure that God is very pleased with their prayer. Their innocence is astonishing.

When one recalls that the entire Ursuline establishment, convent and boarding school, consisted of two small rooms, an incredible pattern of mortification begins to emerge. Never for a moment could the nuns escape from their charges with their strange habits of living. Even the small area set aside for the chapel had to be shared by both nuns and children. And while it is true that the childish repetition of the *Ave Maris Stella* manifests, as Mother St. Joseph declared, a "charming innocence," one wonders at the self-control of the religious who knelt through the twenty repetitions without showing any impatience.

It was precisely this "charming innocence" and sense of wonder which made their children such an ideal audience; and Mother St. Joseph, with her own innocence and wonder undimmed by sophistication or compromise, was an unparalleled storyteller. There was no need to tell them fairy tales, for in Mother St. Joseph's hands the story of creation and redemption had its own magic allure. As she told of those wonderful six days in which God made from nothing everything that is, she watched them sift and compare the elements of her story with the myth of creation which was their tribal heritage. Did God truly make the whole world from nothing? they queried. Did He not fashion the earth from a tiny piece of sand scooped by the muskrat from the bottom of the waters which covered the world? And were men not formed from the dead bodies of the animals, the original companions of the great god of creation, Michabou? As she listened, they rambled on, sharing their own magic stories with her: the story of the woman who ate of the Tree of Light and of how the tree withered when the commandment never to touch it had been violated; of the great rain which covered the whole world; of the birth of the twins who would not live in peace but through whom the constant struggle of good and evil came into the world. Watching their primitive minds groping for the truth, for some adequate explanation of the world and its mys-

teries, she was filled with a great exhilaration. The truth was hers—her one great possession—her treasure to share.

Although the children loved all the nuns, it was Mother St. Joseph who was their own. She was theirs not only as their mistress but in that childlike spirit of joy and simplicity which made her one with the little things of this earth. In summer they pulled her outdoors with them to share the first wild strawberries and raspberries; they brought back to her the first currants, the first blueberries. And when she told them she was afraid they might get lost in the forest, they laughed and revealed to her a little of their forest lore: how the tops of trees generally bend toward the south and the bark of trees grows thicker and darker toward the north, and how one can break off little pieces of leaves and twigs to mark the way. Sometimes they surprised her with strange fruits and nuts which she had never seen in France and which she was afraid to eat; but she soon learned that her woodland nymphs knew all the secrets of the forest and that in this area they rarely made mistakes.

On dark autumn nights she stood by the window with them while they told her their names for the stars—and for each one there was a story: the Pleiades were the Dancing Maidens cast far away from the other stars as a punishment for coming to play with the children of earth; the three stars that followed the Great Bear were three brave hunters stalking their prey; the Milky Way was the path of souls over which the dead must pass. Sometimes she sang the little ones to sleep with an old French lullaby remembered from her own childhood days. It usually did not take many stanzas before the small bodies went limp before the encompassing luxury of childhood slumber. But the nights were not always quiet. Sometimes there were frightening dreams, and for the Indian child, with his deep-rooted belief in dream magic, this meant more than simply a bad memory to be soothed away. What does my dream mean? they asked. What should I do? It would bring very bad luck not to obey a dream, for dreams were the hidden desires of the soul, and if one should disobey the soul then the soul would take revenge by bringing down sickness or death or some great tragedy. So immersed were even the smallest of her charges in a welter of superstition that Mother

St. Joseph sometimes despaired of ever winning them to the true spirit of Christianity.

There was, however, in many of the children a real desire to know this Good Master of whom the nuns spoke so feelingly. During Lent, Father Claude Pijart instructed several boarders in preparation for their first Communion, which took place on Holy Thursday. During these days discipline was no problem, for the children understood clearly that a certain standard of behavior was to be expected from those who were soon to receive their Divine Saviour for the first time. Although only three of them were to receive this privilege, the others hopefully emulated their conduct, and Marie, watching them carefully, wrote in astonishment, "I have never seen French children so eager to receive instruction."

The hardships of that first Canadian winter gave the spring of 1640 a special lilt. They cleaned and washed and aired their little convent with that energetic thoroughness peculiar to the French housewife. At night they listened with apprehension to the thunderous noise of the ice breaking in the St. Lawrence, and with the daylight they watched with delight as the ice floes glided past their house. The river was soon clear and smooth, as they had not seen it since November. It was not long before they discovered, however, that the waters were not so gentle as they looked, when they heard of the near-death of Father Pijart, who had helped them so graciously in the preparation of their children for first Communion. He had been returning on the first day of May from saying Mass at Notre Dame des Anges when his canoe had capsized. The two workmen who were with him had drowned, but he had managed to reach the shore. The Ursulines were to realize more and more as the years went on that violent and unexpected death was often the law of this land of untamed and elemental forces.

Six weeks later the Jesuits again felt the shadow of tragedy, but this time there was no miraculous escape. On June 14, the octave of Corpus Christi, their house burned to the ground. The fire was discovered about four o'clock in the afternoon, and by evening it had destroyed not only the Jesuits' residence but the parish church of Notre Dame de Recouvrance and the private chapel of Governor de Montmagny. When the fire died

down, Father Vimont, then superior, stood looking at the ruins and at his fellow Jesuits. They had been able to save nothing, and all they had left in the world were the thin, summer cassocks which they were wearing. Not only had their own possessions been destroyed but all the supplies of food and clothing for all the other Canadian missions. The superior dared not think of the grim winter ahead. It was a bleak and unadorned account that he wrote for the *Jesuit Relation* of 1640:

. . . our house at Quebec took fire and was reduced to ashes, as was also the chapel of the Governor, and the public church—all was consumed. It took place so suddenly, that in less than two or three hours nothing was to be seen of all these buildings and the greater part of all our furniture, but a few cinders, and some large pieces of the walls which remained, to proclaim this desolation. . . . The linen, clothing, and other articles necessary for the twenty-seven persons whom we have among the Hurons, were all ready to be conveyed by water to those distant countries, and Our Lord made them pass through the fire. . . . What was needed to maintain, according to our limited resources, the residence of St. Joseph, where the savages are assembling; the residence of Three Rivers, where likewise the Algonquins are settling; the house of Notre Dame des Anges, and this same house of Quebec, was all consumed in the flames. All the vessels and the bells and chalices were melted; the stuffs some virtuous persons had sent to us to clothe a few seminarists or poor savages were consumed in this same sacrifice. Those truly royal garments that His Majesty had sent to our savages to be used in public functions to honor the liberality of so great a king, were engulfed in this fiery wreck which reduced us to the hospital, for we had to go and take lodgings in the hall of the poor, until M., our Governor, loaned us a house, and, after being lodged therein, this hall of the sick had to be changed into a church. This was a loss that we shall feel for a long time.⁶

During these desolate days, the Jesuits had two consolations: they had been despoiled of everything, so that now they bore greater resemblance to Christ, Our Lord; they had been deeply moved to see the great generosity of the citizens, who did all they could to raise sufficient funds to restore their house.

In the midst of the shadows a strong current of joy pulsed through all Quebec during the last weeks of June. At this time

of year a single thought took precedence over everything else: the fleet. The fleet which meant mail from France, new supplies of food and clothing and furniture, and most of all personal contact with those who lived in the motherland. The fleet—symbol of all the ties that would never be broken by time or space. No wonder that Marie could write to her former superior in Tours: "I am not nearly so far away from you in spirit as I am in body." The fleet, renewing half-forgotten memories, quickening their love of all those left behind. It was a kind of magic elixir that stirred the life in their veins and made of the dark and lonely days of winter bad dreams now to be forgotten. And on July 2, feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, magic words were shouted through the streets of the town: the fleet had been sighted! Within six or seven days it should reach Quebec. For the religious it brought a joy, longed for and yet unexpected. Six religious were on board: two Jesuits, two Religious of the Hôtel Dieu, and two Ursulines.

On July 8, the Ursulines watched from their windows while the ships slipped into the harbor and dropped anchor. The Governor was there to welcome officially the new arrivals, and in the front ranks stood another welcoming committee: Madame de la Peltrie with her little charges at her side, scrubbed and dressed in their best French dresses. The watching nuns saw the two familiar habits emerging from the shallop, but then lost sight of them in the crowd as the procession made its way along the quay. This year they could not go to Notre Dame de Recouvrance, which had not yet been rebuilt, and instead the prayers of thanksgiving took place in the chapel of the Ursulines.

When the little ceremony was over, they greeted the two Jesuits, Fathers René Menart and Joseph du Perron, and the two nuns of the Hôtel Dieu, Mother Jeanne de St. Marie and Sister Catherine de St. Nicholas, both from Dieppe, before they were led up the steep incline to the Upper Town. Then the Ursulines turned with unalloyed joy to their own two Mothers from the Faubourg St. Jacques in Paris. Mother Anne de St. Claire and Mother Marguerite de St. Athanase had left Dieppe on March 26, but violent storms had kept them in the roadstead for over a month. For the next few hours old missionaries and new compared notes on their respective voyages; no detail,

harrowing or hilarious, was omitted as they shared the adventures of pioneer travel.

Finding room for the arrivals had been a problem; but it had been managed, and the narrowness of their quarters was lost sight of in their excitement and fatigue. What did stand out in the minds of the new recruits during those first days was not the hardships under which they were to live but the spirit of joy and mutual sharing which gave an alacrity to sacrifice. In her first letter home Mother St. Claire wrote:

Our superior, who is Marie de l'Incarnation, treats everyone with great reverence.

Mother St. Joseph has a wonderful disposition. At recreation she often has us laughing till we cry. It would be hard to stay sad in her presence. She is a person who has many beautiful qualities. At present she is mistress of our boarders, whom she loves as her own children.

My duty—or rather my duties—take me from the cellar to the attic. I am procurator and infirmarian. As far as the latter is concerned, I haven't had anything to do, thank God; the former keeps me very busy, for it covers a great many things.⁷

It was with the air of experienced pioneers that Marie and her companions initiated the new recruits into the intricacies of missionary life. The size of the convent made domestic routine more complex; cooking differed vastly in both matter and method from the cooking of France; laundry for their boarders posed unique problems especially. And more important than everything else were the daily lessons in the Indian languages. Meanwhile the first pioneers tried to bury their private heartache: the July fleet had brought no mail from Tours. It was not until mid-August that the second fleet brought the precious letters that they had almost despaired of receiving. Relieved that these had not been lost through the hazards of the sea, Marie wrote to Mother St. Catherine, now superior at Tours, to advise that in the future it might be better not to put all their packages on the same boat. "If this one should happen to be lost," she wrote, "then everything is lost all at once and there is no hope of our receiving anything until the following year."

As Marie leafed through the packet of letters, her fingers slowed in disappointment and disbelief: she had not realized how cer-

tainly she had counted on a letter from Claude. With this unexpected sorrow, all the old worries whose mood and pattern she knew so well swept over her again. She had been so sure that on that day they had met in Orléans he had understood at last, that the old adolescent willfulness had been replaced by a mature acceptance. The sympathy of their last minutes together had swept away so many dark memories and recriminations. In that dingy inn at Orléans she had, she thought, found her son after years of mutual pain and separation. What did it mean, this unexplained silence? She turned to the other letters, hoping that they might shed some light upon her problem. She found to her relief that many of them did contain news of Claude: he was well, although at the moment leading an idle existence. Father Dinét who, while Marie was at Paris, had told Claude to finish his studies before again seeking admission to the Jesuits, had reconsidered meanwhile the matter of Claude's vocation and informed him that he did not think he was suited for Jesuit life. The reasons given were that Claude was hard of hearing and, more important, that he "lacked spirit."⁸ Although Marie had never noticed any deafness, she was inclined to think that Dinét's second charge had some truth about it. Sooner or later she would have to write to Claude, but what would she say?

Should she admit how much his silence and ostensible indifference had hurt her? And how should she respond to his unreasoning diffidence, his apparent inability to make a practical decision and carry it out? With her mental vigor and unswerving motivation she found many of the qualities of her son baffling and a little frightening. He could no longer be excused as a child. The more she thought of him, the more she was convinced that he had to be forced to face reality no matter how painful his dreamer's soul might find it. The letter that she finally wrote minced no words: hers was a love that knew how not to spare:

My very dear Son:

I would not want to treat you the way you have treated me. How could you have the heart to let the fleet leave without sending me the consolation of a single letter from you. Others have written to me; otherwise I would not know a thing about you. . . .

I have written to many of our friends on your behalf, trying

to find a suitable position for you in case your own plans did not work out. It is time that you begin to know yourself; you are old enough for that. You have been helped all during your years of study; now it is up to you to help yourself. It would be shameful if an able-bodied young man did not show a little courage. Pull yourself out of this cowardice and begin to realize that you will never have anything in this world without a little trouble.

Too harsh, perhaps, but surely he would see the depths of the love that prompted the candid words. How would he respond to this unflattering advice? She tried to put the question out of her mind because she knew that it would be almost a year before she could hope to hear from France again.

Their second winter, although full of inevitable hardships, had few surprises for them; and they had learned how to protect themselves in little ways from the bitter cold. They marveled as they watched the Indians leaving for their winter hunt how they could exist in their inadequate bark shelters, sometimes half-starved and always in extreme discomfort. They had heard enough of the sickening details of Father Le Jeune's winter sojourn among the Hurons to know that by comparison their draughty home was the scene of luxurious living.

Part of those winter months was spent in drawing up plans for their proposed monastery in the Upper Town. In the spring of 1641, as soon as the frost was out of the ground, Madame de la Peltrie placed the cornerstone of the proposed building on the site which had been originally suggested by the Company of New France. The Ursulines had learned much about the choice of location from the difficulties encountered by the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu, who had been forced to give up work on their new hospital because of its unsuitable situation.

Although the Ursulines continued in good health, their financial condition was becoming increasingly perilous. The amount of money that went into food and clothing for the Indians was enormous, and now added to that was the expense of their new convent. In August their first regular chaplain, Father Antoine Faulx, arrived from France, adding a new item for their already insufficient budget. For the next two years he was to serve them faithfully despite the fact that they could see their way clear to paying him only ninety pounds a year along with his board.

Every penny was weighed and counted in those difficult days, and the letters of supplication to friends in France increased. Toward the end of August, Marie wrote with some embarrassment to the superior of the Visitation convent at Tours:

It's true, Mother, that we are going to have to find six thousand pounds by the time the first fleet arrives in order to pay our workmen, pay for the building materials, and pay as well for our ordinary provisions. Consequently, we are going to have to deprive ourselves this year of every kind of delicacy and even of the most essential commodities in order to beg our friends to send us money instead of giving us alms of any other sort. This is why I am asking you to give to our Reverend Mother Prioress at Tours whatever you may wish to give us. I am making the same request of all our benefactors in Paris and elsewhere.

The anxiety of these months was more than compensated for, however, by a letter from Claude. It was almost a year since her candid expression of displeasure in him—a difficult year in which her lifelong habit of leaving things to God had been strained to the utmost. But the letter which now reached her more than repaid her worry and prayers. Claude was at the time of his writing a Benedictine novice in the Congregation of St. Maur.

The story of his vocation was an unusual one. Following his refusal by the Jesuits, he gave up any thought of religious life. He drifted aimlessly for a while, and then, recalling his mother's friendship with the Duchess of Aiguillon, had gone to Paris to see this woman who had formerly offered to help him. She was most kind, assuring him that she would use her influence in his behalf; but the months passed and still Claude had no word from her. Lazy and aimless, he did little but read and dream of what the future might hold. One night as he lay on his bed reading, he heard a knock on his door; but when he went to answer it, he found no one. Twice more this happened; and Claude, frightened and uncertain, sought some preternatural cause for the mysterious event. Was it, he wondered, his mother's influence, trying to recall him to a solid Christian life? The thought obsessed him, and once again he began to reflect seriously on the subject of a religious vocation.

He went as soon as possible to tell his story to Dom Raymond,

Marie's former director, who concurred with Claude's interpretation and suggested that he become acquainted with the Benedictines of St. Maur. Claude, for the first time in his life resolute and determined, went immediately to the Father General, who after several interviews agreed to accept Claude as a candidate. At almost the same time a fine position was offered him, but this no longer had any attraction; and in January he left Paris for the Abbey of Vendôme, where on January 15 he was received as a Benedictine postulant.

Marie possessed at last what she had hoped and longed for—and sometimes despaired of. For a moment, twenty years of her life were erased and she was back in the prayerful dusk of the chapel of Marmoutier, where in the days preceding Claude's birth she had prayed that the child which she carried might someday be consecrated to the service of God. When God gave her a son, He tested her faith to the limits of her endurance, for to the end of her life she would never lose the memory of those dark years when she feared for her son's very salvation. "If he becomes a good-for-nothing, I will have only myself to blame," she had once cried to God in an agony of uncertainty. And in answer God himself promised to take care of her child. Year by year she had lived her *Deus providebit* without ever understanding how it would be done. Now joy and peace and a kind of shame for having trusted so haltingly mingled within her in a moment of gratitude too deep for expression. On September 4 she sat down to compose her answer, and there is a kind of flourish of victory in the style of her salutation. Her usual address, "My very dear Son," gave way to a more ceremonious form: "To my very dear Brother in Our Lord, Brother Claude Martin, Novice of the Reformed Benedictines at Vendôme."

"Your letter brought me so great a joy," she began, "that I am going to find it very difficult to express it all to you."

I have suffered very much this year on your account, visualizing all those rocks on which you could so easily fall. But finally God gave me peace in the belief that His loving and fatherly goodness would never lose what I had abandoned to His love. Your letter has confirmed this, my dearest Son, and I have the satisfaction of seeing now all that I had hoped for you—

indeed His generosity has gone beyond my hopes, placing you in a holy order which I honor and respect very much. I had longed for this grace for you . . . but vocations must come from heaven; so I kept silent, never wanting to intrude in what belongs to God alone.

You have been abandoned by your mother and your relatives, but has not this abandonment served you well? When I left you before you were hardly twelve years old, I did so in such paroxysms of grief that God alone knew how great they were. I had to obey His divine will, which ordained that things go thus—although He always gave me reason to hope that He would take care of you. My heart was reassured that I should overcome the one obstacle that kept me from entering religion for six long years. Yet even then, in order to make the break, I needed the sanction of Dom Raymond along with many other signs that I cannot now commit to paper—I would have to tell it all to you directly. I foresaw that you would be abandoned by our relatives and this caused me a thousand pains, and added to this was your own temperament, which sometimes made me fear for your salvation.

When I was at Paris, it would have been very easy to obtain a position for you. The Queen, the Duchess of Aiguillon, and the Countess of Brienne were all very favorably inclined . . . and would not have refused anything that I would have asked for you. . . . But the thought came to me then that if you were to get on so well in the world, your soul might easily become endangered. And once again my old thoughts to want only poverty of spirit as the only heritage for both you and me made me resolve for a second time to put you in the hands of the Mother of Goodness, confident that since I was going to give my life in the service of her Son, she would take care of you. And have you yourself not taken her for your mother and your beloved on the feast of the Purification when you entered your Congregation? . . . Not a day passes that I do not sacrifice you to His love on the heart of His well-beloved Son, begging that in His goodness you will become a true holocaust consumed on this divine altar. And on your part, please pray for me. I visit you many times a day and I speak ceaselessly of you to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph . . . Your humble and affectionate Mother, Sister Marie de l'Incarnation.

P.S. Pray for me especially on the feast of the glorious apostle St. Paul. I was professed on that day.

Her letter was full of news of the mission as well as of personal affection. Now that Claude was also dedicated to the cause of extending the Kingdom of God, she felt that she could count on new sympathy and depth of understanding when she spoke of the hardships and perils involved in the work of evangelization in New France. Although she often makes light of her own difficulties, she cannot say enough about the courageous efforts of the Jesuits. While she had always admired them as men of great spiritual acumen, she now venerated them as saints and heroes. Every letter has tales to tell of their bravery and endurance. With sorrow and admiration she had watched Father Pierre Pijart struggle through his Mass, bruised and exhausted and barely able to stand erect after weeks of inhuman treatment endured among the savages. She added succinctly, "He told me what the Fathers suffer on this mission [St. Joseph]; it is inconceivable." She listened, too, while Father Vimont, with a father's anguished heart, told her of the beatings undergone by Father Ragueneau and his companions among the Hurons. She was not content for Claude to read the annual *Jesuit Relation* but gave a personal account of these apostles whom she was privileged to call her friends:

The Fathers of the Company who are with the Hurons have endured unbelievable hardships this year. The cold and snow have been extraordinary, and to all this you can add the barbarity of these savages who have made them suffer severely. Chaumonot, whom you know, has actually felt their blows. He is a real apostle who is delighted to be found worthy to suffer for Jesus Christ. He has learned the Huron language almost miraculously and has accomplished marvels in this portion of the country where he and De Brébeuf have sown the first seeds of the Gospel. Garnier and Pijart were thought to have been killed, but Our Lord saved them miraculously. It seems likely that this work will yield some martyrs, since the devil is enraged at seeing Jesus Christ conquer the kingdom which he had dared to usurp for so many years. Every day he stirs up more evil to injure the workers of the Gospel.

The word "martyrdom" was beginning to take on a magic aura for her; and although she could not know that many of the priests who now came to offer Mass in their small, incon-

venient chapel would soon shed their blood for the Gospel, she did sense a deepening spirit of immolation. While, as she wrote to Claude, she longed for this ultimate grace for herself, she dared not hope for it because of her unworthiness. And yet, she added, in words that reveal the total dedication of her heart to Christ crucified, "If someone came to tell me, 'Your son is a martyr,' I think that I would die of joy." Yet, lest the young novice waste his time in dreaming of future heroism, she ended with a cautionary note: "Let Him take care of it; He has His own times, this God of ours who is so full of love. For your part be faithful; He will find means of making you a great saint, if you obey His divine inspirations and really want to die to yourself."

Four days after finishing this lengthy letter to her son, the event for which Marie had been planning for over two years took place. A solemn Act of Union was signed which fused into a single congregation the members of the Congregations of Bordeaux and Paris then on the Canadian Mission. The difficulty of establishing a foundation in Canada composed of religious from two distinct congregations, and, consequently, having different customs, had been apparent from the start. Although Marie was not blind to the mutual sacrifices involved, she was firm in maintaining that these could not be serious obstacles for those who shared a common goal. Quibbling over the shape of a habit or the order of the day was to her mind a kind of pettiness totally foreign to a true missionary spirit. The suggestion made by Father de la Haye during the weeks they had spent in Paris that all the religious be drawn from the same congregation had never found favor with her. She made it clear from the start that in her mind this venture was to be open to all Ursulines no matter what the house of their profession, provided that God gave them the grace to volunteer. Father de la Haye finally capitulated, although he seemed to have retained a prejudice in favor of the Paris Congregation. In 1641 the Ursuline community of Quebec numbered two nuns of the Congregation of Bordeaux (Marie and Mother St. Joseph of Tours) and three of the Congregation of Paris (Mothers St. Athanase and St. Claire of Faubourg St. Jacques and Mother St. Croix of Dieppe).

From the start Marie recognized that there would have to

be some adaptation of their Constitutions to permit them to function effectively in this new situation; however, such an adaptation would take years of planning, and meanwhile she sought for a provisional compromise. In the summer of 1640, with a year of missionary experience to guide her, she wrote to the communities of Paris and Tours with the proposed revisions: the religious of Canada would keep the daily order observed at Tours as well as the habit used at Tours; however, all the religious would pronounce the fourth vow (the instruction of girls) customary at Paris. Both houses sent their approval of this plan by the fleet which arrived in August of 1641, and with the help of the Jesuit Fathers an Act of Union was drawn up immediately.

On the morning of September 8, feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Father Vimont came to offer Mass and and witness the formal signing of this Act of Union. At the community Mass he received the fourth vow professed by Marie and Mother St. Joseph with the qualification that it would bind them only during such time as they remained in Canada. Following the Mass, Mothers St. Croix, St. Claire, and St. Athanase went to clothe themselves in the Tourangelle habits which had been prepared for them. When they reassembled, the provisory act was formally signed. Marie's heart rejoiced in this new step toward permanent union. Amid all the doubts and uncertainties of missionary life, she had always been sure that this was how God wanted the Quebec Mission established. Writing a few days later to her former superior at Tours, she averred: "Although I don't know what God wants of me personally, I am sure that He wants our union."

The remainder of September was filled with correspondence. There were always so many letters to write, and Marie with her practical caution often wrote twice to the same addressee to insure at least one letter's arriving at its destination safely. There were benefactors to thank, funds to be solicited, Ursuline convents to be kept informed about affairs of the mission. There were, in addition, family letters, letters of understanding and affection to the nuns of Tours, and most important of all, endless letters to Claude.

One of the last of her letters this year was to Mother St. Catherine, now superior at Tours—an old friend who knew her

well. It is a revealing letter, for here there was no need to hide the weight of her burdens. There are crosses, she admitted, adding, however, that her desire to teach the Indian children made even the hardships sweet. There is the constant struggle to make provisions last, to patch together clothing that is already threadbare, and always there is the desperate need for funds if they are to continue work on their monastery. More painful than all this, however, was the loneliness in which God left her. It sometimes seemed that she had left Him back in France with all the rest of those consolations which she had taken so much for granted.

Father de Brébeuf had once written, following his first experience of mission life:

In France the great number and good example of the Christians, the solemnity of the festivals, the majesty of the magnificently adorned churches preach piety to you. And in our houses, the fervor of our brethren, their modesty, and the many virtues which shine forth in all their actions, are so many powerful voices that cry to you unceasingly, "*respice et fac similiter*."

Certainly we have here none of those external trappings that awaken and sustain devotion. We see nothing but what may be called the essential of our religion, the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, to the marvels of which our faith must open our eyes without being helped by any sensible mark of its grandeur, any more than were in olden times the Magi in the stable.⁹

Like the priest whom she admired so much, Marie, too, was beginning to learn experientially and with a new depth the meaning of St. Paul's phrase, "The just man lives by faith."

In this same vein she wrote to a Visitandine nun at Tours: "Do you know that over here hearts have to have a completely different sensibility from that one enjoys in France? Here there is absolutely nothing that can satisfy the senses; one's affections must be completely divine and spiritual, for God apparently wants the heart to be stripped bare of everything else."

The same theme is reiterated in her letter to Mother St. Catherine as she attempts to explain what qualities are necessary for this missionary vocation. She wants it understood from the first that recruits must be hardy of body and soul; Canada soon shatters illusions of glamor and glory. "There is nothing to satisfy

the senses," she stated with the force of personal experience. She was never one to state the facts obliquely, and although she longed to increase the number of her community, she could not do it at the expense of truth. What souls should Mother St. Catherine encourage for the new mission? She took up her pen and wrote wryly and concisely the *unum necessarium* by which her daughters must live: "to have a real taste for this vocation to Canada, it is necessary to die to everything else."

CHAPTER 12

Late in the summer of 1641, Quebec received unexpected and exciting visitors: Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, and Jeanne Mance, leading a group of forty-five colonists from La Rochelle. But the colonists were not to swell the poorly inhabited town of Quebec; they had, it became immediately evident, far different plans. Under divine inspiration they were, De Maisonneuve explained, on their way to found a colony at Montreal in honor of the Holy Family, which they would call Ville Marie. Hardy though they were, the inhabitants of Quebec were astonished at such temerity. Although Quebec itself was a dangerous target for Indian attack, Montreal, lying 165 miles westward, was in the very center of Iroquois country. To settle fewer than half a hundred French immigrants in the midst of such overt danger seemed even to the bravest a piece of foolhardiness. It was problematic whether Quebec itself would survive the growing Indian attacks, but a colony at Montreal was in its very nature doomed to extinction. The colonists did their best to convince De Maisonneuve of his folly. They assured him that he and his followers would be more than welcome at Quebec; they even offered him the extensive territory of L'Ile d'Orléans, where he would have a certain independence to manage his colonists as he wished. De Maisonneuve, always the gentleman, listened respectfully but would not be moved. They had pledged themselves, he explained patiently, to establish Ville Marie; they could not do otherwise. Tales of Indian atrocities, of the bitter cold of the winters, of the impossibility of raising sufficient produce to keep themselves alive all fell on deaf ears. This adamant pioneer had the combined determination of soldier and visionary, and the arguments against his plan only strengthened his position. "I have not come here to deliberate, but to act. It is my duty and my honor to found a

colony at Montreal; and I would go if every tree were an Iroquois," he replied to Governor de Montmagny, who was piqued and irritated at the affront to his authority.¹ As Governor of Quebec, he had hitherto considered himself as official representative for all of Canada; but now he learned that in addition to the Company of New France, from which (under the King) he held his authority, there had recently been established the Company of Montreal, having the right to appoint and control its own officials, both ecclesiastical and lay. Thus began that unfortunate rivalry between these two lonely outposts of civilization which was to have such injurious results, especially in ecclesiastical affairs.

"The spirit of Godfrey de Bouillon lived again in Chomedey de Maisonneuve," wrote Francis Parkman,² and, indeed, the figure of speech does not seem exaggerated, for despite the approaching winter De Maisonneuve insisted on traveling westward at once. On October 15, accompanied by De Montmagny and Father Vimont, he formally took possession of the land which had been ceded to the Montreal Company. Even he, however, conceded the folly of attempting to spend the winter in that desolate spot; and after a few days of reconnoitering, he returned to the comparative security of Quebec.

The Quebec citizens, hard pressed to maintain themselves during the long months of winter, had little desire to assume the responsibility for forty-five more mouths. The expedition might have fared badly had it not been for the kindness of one of Quebec's most venerable and affluent citizens, Pierre des Puiseaux, who offered them the use of his own home for as long as they should need it. Still with a zest for adventure, despite his seventy-five years, he had from the beginning shown a curiosity which grew to admiration for the proposed project at Montreal. With his usual prodigality he offered the party not only one of his houses, but both. Sillery, he explained, would be ideal for the boat building and provisioning necessary for their expedition to Montreal. His home at St. Michel would be theirs to live in, softening a little by its comparative luxury their transition from Old World to New. St. Michel was described by its contemporaries as a "jewel," for in it Pierre des Puiseaux had done his best to maintain the amenities of French social life. Here silver and glassware and linen were redolent of the homeland; and if the

food that was served was less delicate, nevertheless there continued to be a certain elegance in the manner of its service.

For some time now, Madame de la Peltrie, lonely perhaps for all that she had flung away so impetuously, had taken up her residence at St. Michel and was thus in a position to act as hostess to De Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance. It was an intensely cold winter and the new arrivals were more than grateful for the thick walls and giant fireplaces which protected them in some degree from the blizzards which raged about the walls. It was here during the winter months that Madame de la Peltrie and Jeanne Mance came to recognize the similar qualities of their vocations. It was here, too, that others of the colonists came to learn firsthand of the singular events which had led to this extraordinary mission.

Once again, as in the case of Madame de la Peltrie and the Ursulines, it was a story of divine intervention, of supernatural dreams and inexplicable coincidence. The story seems to have its origin at La Flèche with an ordinary married gentleman, neither wealthy nor prepossessing, who held a commonplace position as tax receiver. His name, however, indicates at least a trace of the nobility: Jerome le Royer de la Dauversière. Dauversière in a vision, or perhaps a series of them, saw with vivid detail an island, beautiful, wooded, uninhabited, and situated at the confluence of two impressive rivers. The island of Montreal, some inner sense, which he could not doubt, informed him. Telling all this to his Jesuit confessor at La Flèche, then a seedbed for Canadian mission enterprise, he was reassured of its validity, encouraged to think of some practical scheme for establishing a colony on this mysterious island, and put in contact with a young priest, Jean Jacques Olier, soon to become the founder of the Sulpicians, who would be to Montreal what the Jesuits were to Quebec. These two understood each other immediately, we are told—not so much by words but by a kind of spiritual affinity. Through Father Olier two other eminent gentlemen were drawn into the picture: De Maisonneuve, noteworthy for his military exploits and piety, and Baron de Fancamp, noteworthy for his fortune and influence. It was the latter who procured for them the necessary title to the land at Montreal.

At this juncture the mystic lines of Providence again crossed,

when there arrived at La Rochelle a young woman of Champagne who had also received interior illumination that her life was to be spent in Christianizing the savages of New France. Armed with the confirmation of her Jesuit director, she had little difficulty in convincing Dauversière and De Maisonneuve that she was the divinely appointed woman to found the hospital which Dauversière's vision had shown him. When the three ships set sail Made-moiselle Mance, then in her thirty-fifth year, was on board, sure, at last, that she had found her destiny.

No matter how the populace of Quebec and its Governor felt about the practicality of the venture, no one could but be impressed by the caliber of the two who guided and directed it. Particularly impressive was the figure of Jeanne Mance, "that indispensable woman of courage and sense" who remained undaunted by all the tales of horror and bloodshed which the colonists gratuitously provided. Marie in particular felt the stamp of sincerity and zeal which so strongly marked the supernatural character of her mission. Madame de la Peltrie was also impressed, how deeply impressed Marie did not realize until she came to her in the spring of 1642 to announce that she had decided to leave the Ursuline foundation at Quebec to join Jeanne Mance in the foundation of Notre Dame de Montréal. Although Madame de la Peltrie had spent much of that winter at St. Michel, the thought that she would make a definitive break with the house which she had founded and which she had pledged herself to sustain had occurred to no one.³ This act on the part of the Ursuline foundress did little to increase the popularity of De Maisonneuve's expedition. It was with a minimum of good feeling that the citizenry of Quebec waved farewell to the little company which sailed up the St. Lawrence on May 8.

The annalist of the Ursuline monastery comments only briefly on this sudden departure of its foundress; charity does its best to hide the shock and disappointment of the small community, now bereft of its only regular source of income:

Our foundress, having lived for two years with our first Mothers in their house on the wharf, was convinced by some devout people that she would be accomplishing a greater good by going to Montreal, where she would have more opportunity for exercising her zeal. This suggestion was enough for her generous heart,

which always aspired after what was most perfect. She left her beloved dependents and, taking with her all her furniture and other things, she departed for Montreal. This was a hard blow for those who had depended on her, not only because she took the furniture—which was, of course, very necessary—but also because they saw that she was putting her life in danger on account of the war with the Iroquois, who made frequent incursions into this territory.⁴

As the nuns prayed for the safety of their errant foundress, Marie knew that they themselves faced perils almost as great, although different in kind. The cost of materials and workmen for their new monastery mounted daily; the long line of Indians at their door, gaunt with hunger and sickness, never diminished. Toward the end of September 1642, as the ships left for France, she wrote, almost desperately, to the superior of a convent of Ursulines in France, begging for help:

But, my dear Reverend Mother, as far as our own needs are concerned, it is necessary, if we are going to exercise the functions of our apostolate, to assist not only the souls but also the bodies of those children whom we instruct, providing them with both food and clothing. That is why I am taking the liberty, after having asked the help of your prayers, to beg you once again to procure for us some material assistance in whatever way you can. . . . If the poor of France sometimes bring tears to your eyes, I assure you that the sight of our poor savages would be able to make your heart bleed, if you could see them as we do, needing instruction for their souls and every imaginable help for their lives. In France, there are many needy but there are also many charitable people to help them; but here everyone is poor and no one can help them but us and a small number of people of means who have come from France. . . . They will be lost if they are not helped, and I know how much their salvation means to you.

As she wrote, she wondered if her religious realized how close their mission was to foundering. She had already begged and borrowed from every available source. Wearily she took comfort in the fact that soon her three years as superior would be up and someone else would be chosen to make the decisions on which their survival would rest. On June 12, under the auspices of Fa-

ther Vimont, the canonical election was held. To her companions, the conclusion was obvious: Marie was to maintain her position for another three years. With hardly enough money to pay the shipping costs on the provisions they had ordered from France, she looked ahead to another bleak Canadian winter. Monsieur de Bernières had been quite explicit when she had asked his advice: it was impossible for him to send her any more funds; he suggested that she stop work on the monastery, send away their boarders, and wait to see if the tide would turn. His next letter was even more decisive: if it were true, as he had heard, that Madame de la Peltre had left them, then there was no other course open to them but to close their house and return to France. Three years of poverty and struggle, three years in gaining the respect and confidence of the savages, of building up their little boarding school; three years of dogged perseverance in mastering the ugly, guttural sounds of the Indian languages—and now to have it all over in a moment. The half-built monastery on the hill, the half-Christianized children—to have them fall back into the savage and encroaching ways of the wilderness. Had God brought them all this way only that the wilderness might reclaim its own despite all their efforts?

Before her lay the Act of Union, so recently signed, with its provision that if necessary they might always return to France. In such a case two alternatives were open to them: they could return to the houses from which they had originally come; or they could form a new house with the approval of the ordinary of the diocese under whose dominion they would live until such time as they could return to Canada. When this proviso had been written, it had seemed to have no immediate or practical application. Now it lay before her, providing incontestably and methodically for the possibility of failure. She knew that if she alone were involved, she would stay; but had she the right to exact such a sacrifice from those in her charge? She struggled for the right decision, a decision at once prudent and courageous, generous and practical; she struggled also against the thought that it need not have been this way had Madame de la Peltre not left them. It was an anguished heart that wrote, "I have no right to judge her."

In midsummer, however, she was lifted out of her discouragement.

ment by a substantial alms from Mademoiselle Anne Marie de Luynes, a former Ursuline pupil. The additional six hundred pounds which Mademoiselle de Luynes had sent Marie became the deciding factor in her resolution that this year at least they could afford to maintain their Indian boarders and continue work on the new convent. The letter of gratitude which she wrote to this devout young woman is surprisingly candid and one of the only places in which Marie admits the full despoilment caused by Madame de la Peltrie's abandonment:

We have received your alms through the hands of Monsieur Bernières, for which I offer you my most humble gratitude. Without this help I think we would have had to send away our boarders this year, as I'm afraid it may be necessary to do in the future. This is what Monsieur de Bernières has advised for the reasons that I have already told you. This will be a very painful loss for us, to which we must resign ourselves, nevertheless, if our Jesus wants it so. . . .

You know the great affection in which we have always held our foundress, who with heroic generosity brought us to Canada. She lived with us for a year in a completely maternal spirit toward us as well as toward our boarders. Then she began to want to visit the savages from time to time, which was certainly very praiseworthy. A little while after, she left us completely, although returning to visit us occasionally. We felt that she had an aversion for the cloistered life, and since she was not a religious it seemed very right that she should enjoy her freedom. On our part we felt that, provided that she did her best to help us—as we had her word that she would do this—our boarding school would not suffer in any way. However, as time passed, her inclination to help us get established diminished day by day. Our affairs received a further setback when certain people—a man and a young Frenchwoman—came last year to erect a settlement at Montreal. No sooner had they arrived than she went off with them. She took back her furniture and the many other things which she had given us and which we were using in the church and boarding school. We let everything go without any objections—rather, I must tell you that I felt a great joy, thinking that our God was treating me as He had once treated St. Francis. I willingly gave up everything, thus leaving the boarding school in very great poverty. As this good lady had been one with us, everything we had was in common use and we had thus gotten

along very well with what she had and the additional furnishings our Mothers in France had provided. . . . At her departure she left us with only enough beds for three boarders, although we sometimes had more than fourteen. We had them sleep on planks, using whatever we could to ease the hardness. We borrowed some fur pelts from the storehouse to use as coverings, for our poverty was such that this was the best we could do. I can't say, under God, that our foundress was wrong; on the one hand I see that she did not have the means to go on helping us once she was separated from us, for her estate was hardly enough to cover the journey that she had undertaken. Besides, since she was returning to the world, it was only right that she be established according to her proper station. Actually, then, we have no right to complain about her taking back her possessions. At any rate, she is so filled with a filial fear of God that I am sure her intentions were both good and holy. What makes me suffer the most is the situation in which she has placed herself at Montreal, where she is in manifest danger of her life because of the Iroquois. . . . And what grieves me even more is that she is remaining there against the counsel of both the Jesuit Fathers and the Governor, who have done everything they can to get her to return.

This radical change has put our affairs in a very bad way, for Monsieur de Bernières, who has been taking charge of them, . . . has informed me that he is afraid he can do very little with our inadequate endowment, which consists of only nine hundred pounds. The hospital nuns have three thousand, and their foundress, the Duchess of Aiguillon, helps them very much; even so, they are just able to make ends meet. This is why Monsieur de Bernières has advised me that we shall have to cancel our work if God does not come to our assistance. Thus we shall have to send away our boarders and our workmen since we won't be able to support them. Just the shipping costs on the things which he has sent us come to nine hundred pounds—and that is the sum total of our endowment. And in addition, he says, "If your foundress has left you—as it appears she has—you will have to return to France unless God raises up another person who will maintain you."

In the light of these words, would you not say, Mademoiselle, that all is lost? One would be forced to believe it were it not for that loving Providence which takes care of even the smallest earthworm. This news has saddened our friends who realize its full import. As for me, my heart is in peace, thanks to the

mercy of our good Jesus for whom we are working. My confidence in His love has made me decide to keep our boarders and to go on helping our poor savages until the end. We are retaining our workmen to keep on with the building, hoping that He who has led us here has not done so simply to destroy us or make us retrace our footsteps. What happens to me doesn't really matter so long as He can find His glory in it. As I write there is a deep and inexpressible peace in my heart.

After all that Monsieur de Bernières has written, he will be a little put out to see that I have gone right on asking for provisions as usual—and even worse—that I am sending the expense accounts for the six thousand pounds used for our workmen's salaries and for the purchase of materials for our building, without mentioning the shipping costs involved. Actually we have nothing to draw on but the Providence of God. They say that all is lost and yet I feel myself impelled to continue what Our Lord in His grace has begun in this new Church. The arrival of the fleet may give us new directions and perhaps new courage to work even harder in the service of our Master.

Poverty was not the only danger which threatened the monastery in those days, for the menace of the Iroquois grew persistently stronger. Marie's fears over the fate of Madame de la Peltrie were not unfounded. Governor de Montmagny's irritation over the new colony, while based partly on what he considered an infringement of his rights, was based also on a very real anxiety over the fate of the visionary band, who refused to listen to either prudence or caution. While De Maisonneuve was undoubtedly a soldier of courage and experience, De Montmagny had already discovered that a life of French soldiering did little to prepare one for the trickery and cunning of wilderness fighting. The Iroquois scourge, which in the next few years was to threaten the existence of the entire French colony, was already gathering its forces. In 1641 Father Vimont, after reading the reports from his outlying missions, wrote urgently to Jacques Diné, then the Jesuit Provincial in France: "New France is going to be lost unless it is promptly and strongly assisted; the commerce of the Company, the French colony, religion itself, which had begun to flourish among the savages, will be ruined unless the Iroquois are subdued."⁵

Wily, patient, cruel, the Iroquois had always been more than a match for their mortal enemies, the Hurons; now armed with the

guns which their Dutch allies had procured for them, their power seemed invincible. De Montmagny had already written to France informing the government of the immediate peril faced by the Canadian settlements, and in the summer of 1642 he learned that forty soldiers were being sent out to Quebec. Earlier expeditions had shown him an excellent situation for a fort, and toward the end of July he set off with a small group to begin construction on what was to be called Fort Richelieu. The spot chosen for this fortification was about one hundred miles west of Quebec at the strategic junction where the Iroquois River emptied into the St. Lawrence. About a week after De Montmagny and his soldiers left Quebec, Father Isaac Jogues, a member of the Huron Mission who had come to Quebec for supplies, shoved off into the St. Lawrence with forty canoes amply filled with provisions for the far-off missions and manned by a large group of Huron families.

Among the passengers was a little Huron Indian girl, Thérèse, a former pupil of the Ursulines who, in the company of her relatives, was returning to her people. Thérèse had been one of the brightest and most devoted of their first pupils, and the parting was mutually sad as she said her final good-by to the nuns who had taught her so much. Young as she was, Thérèse seemed to have caught that sense of apostolic dedication which permeated the convent; the nuns hoped that she would be able to do great things for the Huron Church by the power of her example and her own simple explanation of Christian truth. When the fleet pulled into Three Rivers, Thérèse, still homesick for all that she had left behind, found time to write a little note of gratitude to Marie and her other teachers, entrusting her message to Father Joseph du Perron, who was returning to Quebec.

"Dearest Mother," she wrote, "I am about to leave here. Thank you for having taken such good care of me and for having taught me how to serve God. Do you think that it's a little thing that I thank you for? I will never, never forget any of it."⁸ This was the last word they were to have from their former pupil for a long time. Two days later, on August 2, as the canoes went deeper into Indian country they were ambushed with terrible results by a large force of Iroquois. Many of the Hurons were killed on the spot, twenty-eight were taken captive, among them Thérèse, Father Jogues and his two lay assistants, René Goupil and Guillaume

Couture. The few Hurons who escaped ran in terror and anguish to bring the news to the settlement at Quebec.

For a long time the colonists learned no more than the frenzied fugitives could tell them. The Jesuits waited hopefully for word from some of their distant missions, but communication, always slow and uncertain, was now doubly hazardous with the Iroquois boldly abroad upon the river. No word came, and the inevitable fate of the captives was assumed to be death—such a death as they had often heard of with incredulous horror. In the hands of the Iroquois, death was the last and longed-for release after hours of fiery and bloody agony. Thérèse and Father Jogues—the simple Indian child and the scholarly priest drawn together so inexplicably into this maelstrom of suffering! God chooses whom He will, the religious confessed, realizing this simple truth of faith with new clarity as they waited helplessly for some news of the captives. The Ursulines cherished a single hope for Thérèse; often the lives of young girls were spared in order that they might be married into an Iroquois family. Thérèse, with her knowledge of French, would make a particularly valuable captive. It was a tenuous hope, but they held to it, finding it dearer because it was all they had.

In September, Marie wrote all she knew of these events to Mother St. Catherine, the superior of the Ursuline convent at Tours, who though she had had to renounce her own dreams of being a missionary to New France, retained until her death her interest in all aspects of missionary life. Marie wrote bleakly of this immense tragedy which had taken so many of their best Christians; but it was particularly Thérèse on whom her mother's heart dwelt:

She was put on board, and Father Jogues, who was accompanying the Huron fleet, put her for safety in a canoe with three of his own workmen. They had not gone more than forty-five miles up the river when they encountered the Iroquois who, well-armed, had been waiting in ambush. These savages fell upon our poor Hurons, beating them to the ground. . . . Finally the Iroquois put the Hurons to flight. Father Jogues was taken with two courageous Frenchmen and four of our principal Christians, relatives of Thérèse. She was bound along with one of her cousins—a lad of only fifteen. They were led away with many others, catechumens as well as pagans. There were about twenty-eight

in all. . . . Canada has never before witnessed such a terrible tragedy since the Gospel first began to be preached here. We are told, however, that they may not kill our little captive but marry her instead to one of their own people. If God preserves Father Jogues and our Christians, this may be the beginning of the light of the Gospel in this pagan territory. However, according to all human appearances, they have all been massacred and we have prayed for our Christians as though they were dead.

Not long after there came to the Ursuline monastery Joseph Taondechoren, Thérèse's Christian uncle, who had been with her at the time of her capture. Gaunt and stricken with all that he had suffered and witnessed, he told them gravely of the events following the ambush: the Hurons had, for the most part, been tortured to death; René Goupil was also dead;⁷ Guillaume Couture and Father Jogues were both still alive although terribly mutilated; Thérèse, too, remained a captive but a captive who was still faithful to her last written words, "I will never, never forget." She has helped the other Hurons, Joseph told them, she has kept the faith; she has learned to use pebbles in place of a rosary.⁸ As for Father Jogues and his companion, there was little reason to hope that sooner or later they would not meet their death. Why the Iroquois had kept them so long was in itself a mystery.

In the fall of that same year, the Ursulines were at long last able to take possession of their monastery in the Upper City. They could hardly believe that they would no longer have to endure the icy gusts which found such easy access between the ill-fitting logs of their cabin. As the autumn months grew colder, they cheered each other with the thought that very soon they would be in their new monastery, strong and snugly built. And yet they had to acknowledge that their first home was dear to them; here they had begun their work; here they had been privileged to suffer a little in the cause of Jesus Christ. When Marie wrote an account of those winter months for Father Vimont she noted: "Those daughters who will one day come after us and who will never suffer the outlandish inconveniences which we welcomed, will, perhaps, be strangers to our joys as well as to our sorrows."

Their new monastery had been built with that prudence and practicality which never deserted Marie. She studied colonial architecture with a careful eye, often astonishing the builders them-

selves with her suggestions. The men who worked on the Ursulines' new convent soon discovered what the merchants of Tours had learned long before—the woman who was born Marie Guyart never let a man get the best of a bargain.

The feast which the nuns had chosen for their occupation was that of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, a day which the Congregation of Bordeaux had assigned for annual solemn renovation of vows. This year the feast was prepared for by a vigil of prayer and fasting, and on daybreak on November 21 the little group of nuns, led by Father Vimont and accompanied by their Indian charges, proceeded in solemn procession up the rugged footpath which led to the Upper City. Here in their newly constructed chapel they assisted at a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving, singing, in addition to the Latin chant, hymns composed in the language of their adopted country.

Winter had already set in in full rigor, and the monastery, "the finest in the whole country," as Marie was later to write, was still far from finished. The annalist describing that first winter wrote:

Nothing was finished except the floors and some partitions; the ceilings consisted simply of planks placed across the beams. . . . The first winter that our Mothers spent in this monastery . . . was a time of great suffering because of the rigor of the climate. In order to protect themselves against the cold, they made wooden chests lined with serge or other cloth; here they took shelter during the nights."⁹

Even their first convent had not seemed so cold to them; but it was a beautiful house for all that—the fulfillment of three years of plans and dreams. Writing later to Claude, Marie spared him no detail of their new home:

Our house is built entirely of stone; it is ninety-two feet long and twenty-eight wide. It is the largest and most beautiful of its kind in Canada. It includes our church, which is as long as the width of the house and about seventeen feet wide. Perhaps you will think that this is very small, but the intense cold prohibits a larger space. Sometimes the priests are in danger of having their hands and ears frozen as they say Mass. . . . Don't think that our house is constructed entirely of freestone; no, indeed, that is used only for the corners. There is another kind of stone, something like marble and almost black in color, which

can be quarried from the hillsides easily enough and which is better than French sandstone. The corners are very beautiful but they are expensive to cut because of the hardness of the stone. One man costs about thirty cents a day and we have to feed him on feast days and Sundays and during bad weather. We have our workmen come from France, so that we hire them for three years or more at a time. We have ten of them at present who take care of all our business except that the colonists furnish us with limestone, sand, and brick.

Our house has three stories. We have our cellars in the middle as in France. Our chimney is at the end of the dormitory so that it can heat the corridor and the cells, which are separated only by pine board. Otherwise we could never keep them heated—and you would not believe how impossible it would be to stay for any length of time in one's cell during the winter unless it were heated. It would be too much to stay there even for an hour, and even then one's hands would have to be well covered. Outside the hours of religious observances, the ordinary place for reading, writing, or studying is at the fire. This is an annoying inconvenience, especially for me, who never bothered to warm myself in France. We have wooden beds which close like closets, and even though one doubles the blankets, it's still hard to keep warm. In the winter our savages leave their stone houses to bed down in the woods, where they do not feel the cold as much. Here we put on five or six logs at a time (we burn only big wood), and even then one is roasting on one side and dying of cold on the other. With four chimneys going, we burn 175 cords of wood during the winter—which lasts about six months. Despite the excessive cold we are faithful to our choir observances, although we do suffer a little in doing so.

Their new, enlarged house made increasing demands on their frail budget.¹⁰ The cost of even the most frugal living was frightening, especially now that the Hurons, in flight from their Iroquois enemies, came in increasing numbers begging for food for themselves and their families. As 1642 drew to a close, all three religious communities—Jesuits, Ursulines, and Religious of the Hôtel Dieu—were all drained of resources. Father Vimont, describing conditions in the *Jesuit Relation* for that year, wrote:

As soon as the ships had left, some of the transient seminarists presented themselves, so wretched and so poorly clad that they had to be provided with something to cover themselves; and

what was given to them would have served for more than twenty of the resident seminarists. . . . That is not all. Many savages from the island, from the Iroquois tribe and from other quarters, who had encamped somewhat close to Quebec, went every day to the chapel of the Ursulines, where Father Du Quen dispensed spiritual alms to them. Some of them were baptized in this little church, after having been sufficiently instructed. When the sermon was over, the Mothers gave food to eighty persons—an act of charity that they continued during about six weeks.¹¹

Actually, it was an act of charity which was to continue in varying degrees for many years to come. Even two years later, in 1644, the nuns noted, "we received from France 2894 pounds; in addition, a chasuble of silver cloth and five pictures for our church. The following spring they sent us 4447 pounds. All this was used to alleviate the misery of the savages."¹² Although even these generous gifts were not sufficient to meet the needs of all who depended on them, they were enough to determine that, despite Monsieur de Bernières' advice, the Ursulines would be able to continue their work in Quebec.

The boats which arrived in the summer of 1643 brought news of two important deaths: Cardinal Richelieu, who had died December 4 of the preceding year, and Louis XIII, who had followed his chief minister on May 14, 1643. The colonists hardly knew what emotions were theirs when they learned of the death of the King and his first minister. Having lived through so many changes of French policy, they waited anxiously to see what tack the new government would take. They were soon to find, however, that Anne of Austria, now Queen Mother, intended for the time being to make no changes. Always interested and sympathetic with the needs of the colonists, she did what she could personally to help them; but it was not until the accession of her young son, that New France would feel the full force of royal protection and royal authority.

The letters that arrived from France that summer brought their burden of personal heartache to Marie; her sister Claude had met a sudden and tragic death. On September 14 she wrote to her niece, promising her prayers and attempting to console her in her unexpected loss:

I would like to believe that your terrible grief at the loss of your mother, coming as it did through such a tragic accident, explains why I have had no word from you this year. I don't want to give up writing to you, because I want to assure you that I also suffer because of your loss and feel with you that anguish which you have endured and still continue to endure because of this dreadful blow.

For her elder sister, who had, wittingly and unwittingly, caused Marie so much pain and anxiety, she had only a litany of praise: her almsgiving, her piety, her works of charity—all these, she reminds her young niece, will plead loudly for her mother before the throne of God. Death had closed the rift of misunderstanding between them, and Marie, habitually given to looking at only the best, found her memories very sweet.

The loss of her sister was less painful to her than the anxiety which she felt on behalf of the seventeen-year-old orphan whom she had left behind. Marie Buisson, vain, attractive, and self-willed, had already been a cause of worry to her family. When she was only fifteen, her charms had captivated a certain cavalry officer, François Musset, who had not been averse to using force to win her. As she left Mass one morning accompanied by a servant, he had compelled her to enter his carriage and carried her off to a nearby château. While the frightened servant scurried home to tell the Buissons of this fearful turn of events, Marie was forced to listen to the amorous declarations of love made by the romantic Musset. For a girl of fifteen she did remarkably well, for neither the threats nor promises nor blandishments of the cavalry officer moved her. Dashing young men connected with the nobility were used to having their way with daughters of the bourgeoisie, and Musset found himself thrown off balance by Marie's cool and persistent refusal to accede to his demands. Unwilling to give up so easily, he kept her hidden in the château, guarded and cared for by a woman of his own choosing, while her frantic mother searched the city for her. Finally, after days of desperate searching, Claude Buisson raised a group of men who located the captive and succeeded in freeing her. Thus Marie Buisson and François Musset had had their first encounter—an encounter in which all the laurels went to Marie.

Less than a year later Marie's mother was dead, leaving her

alone and unprotected against further assaults by the still enamored Musset. Having learned that with a girl of Marie's character, violence achieves little, Musset now resorted to trickery. He made it known that Marie was his legal wife and that he was being kept from her against his will. The Queen Mother, having been advised of the plight of this poor husband, demanded that his wife return to him. Marie meanwhile had taken refuge with the Ursulines; but even this did not deter Anne of Austria in doing what she conceived to be her duty. A royal order was sent to Victor Le Bouthilier, then Archbishop of Tours, commanding him to see that Marie née Buisson be returned to the custody of her lawful husband, François Musset. Marie in desperation took a typically melodramatic course: she announced to the Queen that she was about to take the veil.

This was drama of a high order and Anne was no doubt enjoying her role in it. Whatever her personal opinion, she found that she must concede to the whims of this fanciful but determined young lady and thus advised Musset that he must be content to abandon his wife to the arms of the Church. For the young lady involved, however, the arms of the Church were only slightly less revolting than the arms of her lover. She recognized, even if those around her did not, that she had with her usual impetuosity catapulted herself into a life for which she had not a shred of natural attraction. But Marie Buisson, whatever her faults, had the family characteristic of being able to face reality: if she were to be a nun at all—and she still shuddered at the prospect—then she was determined to be a good one. How difficult the task she set herself she did not realize at the beginning, although her aunt, with the wisdom of the saints, remarked from the start that it would take a great deal of mortification before this young lady would be able to overcome her ingrained habit of doing what she pleased.

But in 1643, when Marie received the news of her sister's death, she could foresee none of these unusual events. She knew only that the pretty five-year-old niece whom she had kissed good-by when she had left the Buisson household eleven years before, was now, at the age of seventeen, completely alone in a dangerously enticing world. Thus began a long series of letters, practical, loving, devoted, with their single goal of leading this niece whom she loved so dearly more deeply into the Kingdom of Christ.

This same summer of 1643 brought further news of Father Jogues and those taken captive with him. On March 27, Jerome Lalemant, then in charge of the Huron Mission, had written to the Jesuit General, Reverend Mutius Vitelleschi, that Jogues and the two *donnés* who had accompanied him were dead. Lalemant had even composed an elegy for them. But despite his tortures, Isaac Jogues lived on, baptizing, consoling, suffering. On June 29, he was able to smuggle out a letter addressed to Governor de Montmagny. It was not the first letter which he had written in an effort to tell his friends of his condition, but it was the first one to reach its goal. In it he spoke of the seventy baptisms since his captivity; his converts were, unfortunately, not Iroquois but Huron captives or dying babies. The letter, written in a garble of French, Latin, and Huron, to make it unintelligible should it fall into alien hands, is the document of a saint, a saint who through anguish of body and mind had come to a heroic decision:

Take no account of me, and in any question which touches on me do not hesitate to adopt whatever course would seem to be for the greater glory of God. . . . I have taken a resolution which has become stronger each day: to remain here for as long as it will please Our Lord and not to look for means of regaining my liberty even though they should be offered to me. I do not want to deprive the French, the Hurons, and the Algonquins of any help that they might receive from my ministry.¹³

However, within a month after writing this heroic document, Jogues, having been advised that his death was imminent, took advantage of an opportunity to escape. For two months he lived with his Dutch deliverers, who sailed from New York in early fall. On Christmas Day, 1643, Isaac Jogues was put on French soil near St. Pol de Léon. All of this, however, his fellow missionaries did not learn until the following summer. When at last, in July of 1644, they heard that Father Jogues was aboard a ship returning to Canada, they were filled with a strange mixture of joy and awe that this man, having suffered beyond human endurance, should return again to the scene of his passion. When he did reach Quebec, he made a special visit to Marie to share with her, as she says, "every detail of God's Providence during his captivity." In a letter to Claude she wrote, "God has given back to us a true,

living martyr who bears in his body the coat of arms of Jesus Christ."

"To die and yet to live," St. Paul had written, as though he had in mind this frail little priest with his sensitive scholar's face and mutilated body. Three years before, Jean de Brébeuf, then at work in the Huron country, had one day seen a cross in the sky moving northward from the land of the Iroquois. Asked by his companions to describe his vision, he had replied in his slow, halting manner, "A cross large enough to crucify us all." With Isaac Jogues the era of martyrs had begun.

The autumn months of 1643 were particularly busy with the affairs of the boarding school, the winter provisioning, the huge correspondence which had to be sent with the fall fleet. This year things were more precarious than ever as a result of the loss of the ship which had carried all the provisions for the Ursulines, the Jesuits, and the nuns of the Hôtel Dieu—an irreplaceable loss amounting to almost six thousand pounds. Yet through it all Marie found time for long letters to Claude, notes to her little nephews, as well as full accounts of mission life to their many benefactors. To a nun at Port Royal she wrote, "Please excuse this rough copy but I am in a rush of more than two hundred letters."¹⁴ And again she wrote to Claude at the end of September, "I am writing this to you at night because I am still in a hurry to finish some letters and the boats are on the verge of leaving. My hand is so tired that I can hardly guide it, that is why I am bringing this to a close. Please excuse me for not rereading this letter."

With the fleet gone, the colonists settled down to a monotonous snowbound winter. But before ice sealed the St. Lawrence, a little expedition came sailing down from Ville Marie. Out from among the baggage stepped the capricious Madame de la Peltrie followed by her faithful maid, Charlotte Barré. Although she had been gone for eighteen months, she gave little explanation and apparently none was exacted. She announced simply that she was home again.

CHAPTER 13

In the summer of 1643 Marie learned that Claude had pronounced his vows as a Benedictine monk on February 3 of that year; this news brought her, as she wrote to her sister-in-law Louise Guyart, an "overwhelming joy." With this new bond between them, her letters to Claude grew longer; he was avid to have every detail of his mother's life, and Marie, busy as she was, took time to satisfy his most minute questions: the construction of the houses, the number of religious in New France, the Indians' manner of dressing. Even when his questions descended to the level of the botanical, she took time to write: "We have a large number of cedar trees here; we use these to make our brooms. There are also hard pines, firs, and spinets: these stay green all winter despite the cold. The other trees are much the same as in France."

Although her letters to her son had to be written at night for the most part, after a long day filled with work and anxiety, still she found the labor sweet. The fact that he was now consecrated to the service of God, that he was truly her "son in Christ," was enough to dispel all her fatigue; and her letters are permeated with a spontaneity which only love could produce. Her first letter following his religious profession is aglow with peace and gratitude:

You can well believe that my heart received the greatest consolation it has ever known when I learned that you were completely dedicated to God by the vows of religion. . . . I had already given you to Him before you were born and when I was still in the world my heart was always yearning that in His goodness He would deign to accept you. You were hardly thirteen when He promised me that He would take care of you and thus put my heart at ease. When you were a little older and I began to hear that your life was a bit too free and easy, I began to suffer on your account so that I was constantly having recourse

to God, whom I knew so well would never fail you. And yet you could easily, by our own shortcomings, turn his plans for you topsy-turvy. . . . It was then that I gave you as your spiritual guardians the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and it was through their hands that I offered you each day to His Divine Majesty. Do you think, my dearest Son, that I was not aware that your heart was closed to everything I said when I tried to talk to you of God, or religion, and of the happiness of those who serve Him? I saw it all too clearly and it was my sharpest pain; for it seemed to me each day that you would throw yourself over the precipice. And yet through it all I had a feeling in my heart that God was keeping a grace for you to call you to Himself at a time and in a manner that He would indicate so that you would serve Him in a special way. . . .

You ask if we will ever see each other again in this world. I do not know; but God is so good that if His name were to be glorified and if it were for the good of your soul and mine, I think He would bring it about. Leave it all to Him. I would love it no less than you, and yet I want nothing except in Him and through Him. Let us lose our own wills for love of Him. I see you every day in Him. And in the evening when I am at Matins, I remember that you are there too, for we are in choir about eight-thirty, and as you are five hours ahead of us, it seems to me that we are chanting the praises of God together. . . . Let us live in Jesus and see each other in Him.

Following his profession Claude remained at Vendôme, where shortly after Easter the General Chapter of the Benedictines of the Congregation of St. Maur convened.¹ Despite his youth he was asked to act as secretary to this assembly. At its conclusion he went, as was customary, to the Abbey of Tiron, about forty miles north of Vendôme, where the young professed continued their theological studies.

Always somewhat rigid, he apparently found great difficulty in adjusting to those duties which seemed to run counter to his ideal of the interior life. Writing to his mother about all the time-consuming functions attached to his job as guest master, he no doubt expected a more sympathetic reply than he received. Marie had long since felt the struggle between the active and contemplative spirit, but she had learned from experience the supernatural value of that selfless charity which effaces itself to serve the neighbor. In this spirit she wrote succinctly to Claude: "When one is too

much in love with the solitude of his cell, it's good to deprive him of it for a while." And in the same letter she comments: "The mixed life has its distractions, it's true; but let us remember that it is animated by the spirit of Him who has prescribed it. I never find myself more closely united to God than when I leave my own comfort for His love. . . . I'm telling you this to make you see that this kind of mixed life has given me greater strength than I can say."

Despite Marie's personal attraction for prayer and the great esteem in which she held the interior life, her letters to Claude during this period and even later place great stress on simple Christian charity. Wisely she detected a little of the visionary in her son's exalted dreams. Her keen eyes were not blinded by maternal affection, and she found much of youthful pride and self-love in Claude's preoccupation with his own faults and virtues. The irresolution and diffidence which had caused him to waste so much of his time before entering the Benedictines had not been entirely vanquished, and in it Marie saw one of the greatest dangers for his spiritual life. "You will become a saint if you really want to," she replies tersely after reading his involved account of his doubts and fears. "I want you to pay attention to this; it is our own self-love which makes us slaves and ruins everything. . . . There is no need to look for any other reason why we have not been saints from our first Communion." Three years later she had to return again to the same point of attack. Claude, still timid and hesitant, was thrown off balance by his own frailty, his continued imperfections, his inability to measure up to the ideal which he had set before himself. To Marie the solution was obvious; she had long since plumbed the depths of her own weakness and recognized that it was not her own private virtues which mattered to God but the loving abandonment with which she threw herself into His arms. If Claude once realized that, he would be spared the last hazard of wounded pride: despair. It was this which she had in mind when she wrote:

What you must do in the state of helplessness in which you find yourself at present is to follow God and imitate His perfection. For myself, when I find myself in this state, I try to lose myself in Him; I do my best to forget myself, to see only Him, and when my heart is able, I speak to Him lovingly. . . .

I am much more imperfect than you, but why should we hesitate to lose ourselves in Him who wants to free us and who will do it, too, if only we will abandon ourselves to Him with a strong and loving confidence?

Humility and constancy, she cautioned, were the true path to God. "Begin each day to love God as though you had not really loved Him yesterday," she advised the young monk so prone to discouragement. And in answer to his request that she obtain for him by her intercession the gift of true prayer, she wrote: "I will ask God, if you like, to give you the gift of prayer, but above all I will pray for humility and abnegation of self, for without these there is no true prayer nor any real interior spirit." As she wrote, she recalled those long past days in Tours when the "gift of prayer" had been her life. She could not have foreseen then that the greatest deprivation of her missionary vocation would not be those hardships of body or even of affection, but a hardship of the spirit, a despoilment of the very core of her being. How little time there was now to lose herself in God, to close her eyes and let His measureless infinity sweep through her. Life now was all work—rude, laborious work that lasted far into the night. Although the pattern of her life had changed within these last six years, one thing she knew was constant: love was still there, impelling and directing. It had not changed, although it had found a new dimension.

Claude's query of whether they would ever meet again in this life was more than an idle thought, for, as he confided to his mother, he had begun to think of a missionary vocation. Marie, while agreeing that it was quite possible that God might give him such a grace and that she in no way doubted his zeal for souls, cautioned him not to waste his time in idle dreams and speculations. She warned him how easily the true spirit of God may be obscured by impetuous desires which make it difficult to judge a true vocation from a false. The former, she pointed out, is known more perfectly "by a loving confidence and long perseverance which in no way destroys peace of heart, rather than by a glowing transport or continual emotion which comes only from the senses."²

Again and again with increasing firmness Marie returned to the point that a vocation, and most especially a vocation to the mis-

sions, must be initiated and guided by God rather than by any human desire or agency. Speaking of her own missionary vocation, she observed that looking back she could see that from her childhood God prepared her for this unique grace.

It seems to me that from my childhood God has disposed me for the grace I have at present. For even then my heart was less in my own country than in foreign lands where I watched in spirit the generous actions of those who worked and suffered there for Jesus Christ. I did not know then why I had all these impulses, for I had neither the experience nor the interior knowledge to recognize them for what they were. And anyway it was not yet time, for He who orders all things sweetly wanted me to pass through diverse states before He would manifest His will.

Marie's unswerving conviction that a missionary vocation was divine in its inception and its growth made her unusually cautious in accepting volunteers. Although the little mission in Quebec could easily benefit from increased personnel, Marie was in no hurry to take on doubtful subjects. When letters from Tours praised the sudden spiritual conversion of her niece, now Sister Marie de l'Incarnation, indicating that she might one day join her aunt in the New World, Marie's replies were decidedly cool. Although she never doubted the dominance of God in the realms of grace, she recognized with equal clarity the part that the human will must play in the work of conversion. She agreed that her niece had excellent natural qualities, remarking, "If she once puts her mind to solid virtue, she will do something very worthwhile."³ However, there remained the difficulty of overcoming by constant mortification those ingrained habits of vanity and self-will which the impetuous Marie Buisson had nourished in herself for many years. As to her desire to come to Canada, Marie was adamant: "You tell me that she wants to be with me," she writes to Claude; "That is just what I do not want for her own good. She must manifest a vocation entirely different from any merely natural inclination." In a later letter in the same year, she pursues this subject more at length:

My niece has written to me and tells me . . . that she plans to come over here. Please don't bring up this subject

with her; I'm afraid that our Mothers might think that it was I who had sent for her. Just recommend the whole affair to God, and if she should write to you about it, answer her in whatever way God inspires you without mentioning me except to assure her that I love her as I would my own daughter. This vocation to Canada must not be looked upon with purely natural inclination nor with too great precipitation, but rather with a real, solid perseverance; otherwise the subjects who come over here will not find any real satisfaction, and not finding what they had hoped for, they will soon take the next boat back to France. It is for precisely this reason that we have not as yet received any novices.

In the summer of 1644, Marie could write to Claude that her convent numbered nine religious in all: eight choir nuns and one lay sister, Anne de St. Laurent, who had come from Dieppe in 1642. Earlier that summer two other religious had come to swell their ranks, arriving on June 14 in the company of Father Le Jeune, who was returning to his beloved mission after a prolonged visit in France. The newcomers were both from the convent of Tours: Anne de St. Cécile and Anne de Notre Dame. They were the first recruits to be sent from the Tourangelle house since the mission opened, and Marie and Mother St. Joseph listened with eager hearts to all the news of what they were still inclined to call "home."

Yet despite the sincere joy with which the new missionaries were welcomed, Marie was realizing more deeply each year the necessity for sending only the most supernatural religious to this mission. The difficulties of adjusting to a totally new pattern of life were overwhelming, and truly heroic virtue was necessary to accept the only kind of existence which Canada could offer them. The very closeness in which the religious had to live demanded a patience and charity of unusual caliber. Petty faults which might easily go unnoticed in the large, well-established monasteries of France could grow into unbearable crosses in this new world of unalleviated work and hardship. When, therefore, that same summer Marie received a letter from the superior of the Ursuline convent of St. Denis offering a subject for the Canadian Mission, she hesitated. Finally in September she wrote with surprising caution, thanking the superior but refusing her offer. Once again she under-

lined the necessity to send to the mission only religious whose vocations had been thoroughly tested and proved over a sufficiently long space of time; she adds tactfully that although she is sure that St. Denis would not offer a subject whose qualities were in any way suspect, she feels that a little delay in this matter will prove only the solidity of the vocation. In conclusion she summarizes what she considers necessary for the Canadian Mission:

As far as the physical requirements are concerned, she should be young in order to learn the languages easily; she should be strong to endure the fatigues of mission life; she should be healthy and robust so that she can adapt herself to the rough living to be found in this country. As for the spiritual requirements, it is to be hoped that she would be docile, submissive, and with the good will to adjust to our union. These qualities would be sufficient.

The union of which Marie speaks here was one of the major problems facing her since her arrival in 1639. The necessity of drawing up a constitution to which the various congregations involved would agree and which would meet with canonical approval was a grave one. The Act of Union which had been authorized in 1641 was only a temporary measure, and the years between 1641 and 1645 were filled with discussions and suggestions for a permanent rule. Marie, writing to Claude in October of 1645, explains the mutual sacrifices entailed by the Act of Union under which they were then living and continues at length, discussing the difficulties involved in reaching a permanent settlement.

Despite the fact that there were undoubtedly differences of opinion within the monastery itself, it was not this that formed the cause of her anxiety, but the far thornier problem of obtaining ecclesiastical approval from bishops who had strongly individuated opinions. In answer to a comment made by Claude about the difficulty involved, she wrote:

You are right in what you said about the union of our congregations in France. If this is to be accomplished, it must be done through the bishops of all the dioceses in which there are monasteries, since we are their subjects. The difficulty is that as they are free to draw up the constitutions and establish various customs, they do so in a way that permits many dif-

ferent customs within a single congregation. Add to this the fact that each group has its own basic constitutions, which are often completely altered and upset because of the changes made by the bishops. At the present time, everything is so scattered that in order to achieve a real unity, there would have to be a union of the ecclesiastics involved with the consent of the Holy See, as well as a constitution approved by His Holiness. I have received a letter from Paris telling me that there was to have been a General Assembly of the clergy at Paris last May. I don't know what was done; I put it all in God's hands. The Congregation of Paris and our own are the largest and also the most similar. I have no doubt, however, that there would be a good number of difficulties in settling the problem because of the large number of houses involved and also because of the different dioceses in which they are situated.⁴

Marie's concern for unity was of a larger scope than simply the Canadian Mission. Writing in 1645 to Mother Claude de St. Agnes, superior of the Ursuline house at Dijon, she speaks hopefully of a union of "all the houses of our order" adding, however, that she recognizes the difficulties involved, particularly the hesitation and disapproval of the local bishops, who seem to have little taste for the project. She does not admit herself vanquished, however, and continues hopefully: "I agree with you, Reverend Mother, that the union of our houses will be very necessary for both their spiritual and temporal progress."

In 1645, the convents of Tours, Paris, Dieppe, and Ploërmel were contacted for advice and permission to draw up a permanent constitution for Quebec. By the time an affirmative reply was received in 1646, the superiorship of the mission had changed hands. On June 12, the canonical election took place and Mother St. Athanase replaced Marie.⁵

A few months later another change occurred when Father Jerome Lalemant arrived to replace Father Barthélemy Vimont as the Superior of the Jesuit Missions and consequently the canonical superior of the Ursulines and the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu. Brother of the former mission procurator, Charles Lalemant, and uncle of Gabriel, who in 1649 would meet his death in company with Jean de Brébeuf, Jerome Lalemant had arrived in New France in 1639. He had been sent at once to the Huron Mission,

where he had replaced Father de Brébeuf as superior. His transfer to Quebec had come from France in 1644; but communication with the Huron territory was then impossible, and he did not learn of his new charge until a year later. In mid-September he was officially declared Superior of the Mission and arrived at Quebec to assume his duties on October 2.

Marie, writing that day to Mother St. Bernard at Tours, notes: "I just interrupted this letter to go to sing the *Te Deum* for the happy arrival of Father Lalemant, Superior of the Missions." How very happy his arrival was to be both for the convent in general and particularly for her own spiritual development Marie did not immediately guess. Nine years later, writing a full account of her interior life for Claude, she recalls:

This same year, Reverend Jerome Lalemant, formerly superior of the Huron Mission, came to Quebec to assume the Superiorship of the Missions of New France, which post Father Vimont had just left. Our Lord filled me with a strange intimation that this was the person in whom I should confide and who would assist me wonderfully both in my own personal conduct and for the general good of the community. . . .

One of Marie's greatest deprivations since leaving Tours had been that of spiritual direction. Although all the Jesuits on the mission had been more than helpful and Father Vimont in particular had been especially generous with his time and advice, yet Marie had not felt that spontaneous understanding which alone would have made it possible for her to open her heart.

Occasionally she wrote to her old director, Dom Raymond; but although she never lost confidence in his wisdom and prudence, yet the very distance which separated them made such a course far from satisfactory. Soon she found that the spiritual distance between them was harder to bridge than the Atlantic itself. Dom Raymond, for all his experience, could not imagine such a life as that which she lived in Quebec. "One would have to experience it to understand," she had once written after a hopeless effort to describe her situation. Yet even if she could explain, her sense of loyalty and charity forced her to silence on many of the points which caused her pain. Once she did write to Dom Raymond:

... it seems to me that nothing I do has any value, and that is why I am afraid to talk to you about it all. But since you wish me to, I will say this: I need very great courage to carry all the crosses which fall upon me in our foundation. . . . I repeat that I could not possibly express how much I have suffered; and even were I able to do so, the charity which I owe to my neighbor would not permit it.⁶

Meanwhile she tried to confide her difficulties to Father Le Jeune, whose experience as a missionary would, she thought, give him a certain understanding of her state. Yet despite his kindness, she found herself utterly incapable of explaining her interior state. "This was especially painful for me," she wrote later, "for I had always been able to express myself at least sufficiently to make myself understood."

Characteristically, Marie learned to use this spiritual deprivation as she had learned to profit from so many other trials. The quality of her faith recognized that in this as in all else the Providence of God was manifest and that the very loneliness and insecurity which pervaded her soul could be but another motive for casting herself on God alone. In 1645 she replied to a religious at Tours who had written complaining that her director had been taken from her:

It is precisely on these occasions that we must practice a very complete detachment, since exteriorly and to all appearances we have lost a very great spiritual good. I say "exteriorly," for as far as our interior progress is concerned, if the soul is really spiritual and knows how to recognize this loss for what it is, she will acknowledge that if she is faithful to grace and to the frequent invitations of Our Lord, she can get along without many natural supports. It is just this which will give her inner strength.

But Marie's "inner strength" had been tested to the limit of its endurance and Father Lalemant's arrival was divinely timed. Never given to exaggeration, she does not hesitate to speak of the overwhelming crosses of her first three years in New France. Although she had been forewarned in some measure by the words which Our Lord had addressed to her while she was preparing for her mission vocation, yet the concrete and daily reality was not easily supported. "Go, now, and serve me at your own expense,"

He had said to her; and frightened though she was at this prophecy of suffering, she had consented. She could never have envisioned, however, even in her wildest imaginings, what this "expense" would entail.

The cross under which she was bowed during those years had a triple dimension: there was, first of all, the essential difficulties inherent in her mission vocation; added to this were turbulent temptations against fraternal charity; and lastly, and permeating all else, was the spiritual desolation which seemed to strip her soul of its strength. There were times when even the simple facts of missionary existence seemed unendurable: the constant poverty and sickness and spiritual dereliction among the savages, their indifference or intransigence in the face of her most persistent efforts, the cold piercing her through until she thought she would die of it, the constant peril which was warp and woof of pioneer life.

Writing to Claude concerning the problems involved in the Canadian Mission, she admits:

But who could have told you about the trouble I have had in making this establishment? Yes, I have certainly had some, and unless one had experienced it, it would be difficult to believe how many difficulties one encounters in making a foundation in a new and barbarous country far from France with all its helps.

And on this same point she wrote to Mother St. Bernard, "It's no small undertaking to make a foundation like this at the ends of the earth."

And yet these material difficulties seemed trivial when she compared them to those problems which arose from her relationships with those around her. Although she refers to this more than once as one of the most difficult situations in her life, she veils her allusions so carefully that it is difficult to determine the exact nature of the problem. That she felt herself misunderstood and rashly judged by those whom she dearly loved and respected and for whom she had sacrificed much is the only fact which emerges clearly from the welter of ambiguous references which clog her narrative. Her contemporaries, no doubt, had little trouble in in-

terpreting her cryptic allusions, but for latter-day readers all remains hidden in the shadows of conjecture.

The root of the difficulties may well have been the changes in their customs and constitutions necessitated by the need to adapt to the work of the mission. While Marie frequently mentioned the peace and concord in which her nuns lived, she also referred to the "sharp thorns" with which the whole problem of union was hedged. While still in Paris, Father de la Haye had brought up the possibility of friction between the members of two congregations, but Marie had been scornful of what she had considered a pusillanimous point of view. She was to learn by a slow and bitter path that it was sometimes easier to risk one's life for a noble cause than to relinquish a single sacrosanct tradition.

In addition to the task of bringing the diverse elements within the community into harmony was the enormous bulk of work which was inevitably forced upon them. Writing sometime later to Father Lalemant, she admitted that seeing the nuns continually overburdened had been one of her greatest anxieties:

My greatest suffering came from not having any lay Sisters, and since there were only five choir nuns at this time it was unavoidable for them to be burdened with all the outside work. This, added to our ordinary religious exercises, made things very difficult and often left my poor Sisters overworked. Although I did my best to relieve them, there was, actually, very little that could be done.

There were times apparently when the little she could do to lighten the burden was not enough. Often cold, sometimes hungry, worked far beyond the limit of their strength, bereft of every spiritual consolation which normal religious life would provide—no wonder if tempers sometimes ran short!

Perhaps the very heroic quality of Marie's own endurance was another thorn in the side. Possessing an unusual self-control and steeled through the years to an extraordinary capacity for mortification, Marie seemed able to work and pray far beyond the limit of ordinary human prudence. Watching her striding always ahead of them, somehow managing the work which they had neither the strength nor the time to do—this in itself may have been enough to build up that attitude of coldness which she alludes to several

times. Perhaps it is true, as Dom Jamet, her latest commentator, suggests, that her single, unforgivable fault was the fact of being always right. Never easy on herself, she may well have demanded in those early days more than her subjects could reasonably be asked to give. As superior she assumed the full responsibility of her office; she felt conscience bound to see that the rule was kept even at the cost of some personal suffering. That such rigor might bring criticism upon herself was, she felt, simply inconsequential. Writing to her niece about a nun who had asked her advice, she commented: "I don't know how she is going to take my answer; I must confess to you that I am simply incapable of deceiving or flattering, especially where there is a question of virtue; sincerity is my only guide."

Although with the election of Mother St. Athanase as superior in the summer of 1645, a portion of Marie's trial was alleviated, she continued nevertheless to manage the financial responsibilities of the community. "It seemed to me," she wrote that fall, "that God's voice followed me everywhere, saying, 'God wants you to build Him a house.' This voice can make me surmount every obstacle, even making me forget myself and my own ease."

Yet the trial which caused her the most suffering and which permeated everything did not diminish: this was God's interior treatment of her. "I was powerless," she wrote and could hardly bear to say more. Powerless—powerless to love, powerless to act purely for His glory, powerless to fight the temptations which beset her without respite. Later she wrote out of the limpid clarity of her own experience, "Loss of honor or of reputation—these things don't matter, provided only that purity of heart triumphs." They were not banal words; she knew a little what it was to be treated with mistrust and suspicion. The tragedy was, it seemed to her, that although she was only too willing to suffer all this, yet nevertheless that purity which meant everything to her seemed beyond her reach. Looking within herself, she saw only the great abyss which separated her from that God of purity and love for whom she had renounced everything that life could offer. Even that total consecration was apparently not enough to establish her in virtue. Watching the sudden sweep of passion within her, she began to fear even the uprightness of her intentions. Was she to find now, after so much had been sacrificed, that her spiritual life

had been built upon quicksand, that the solid virtue she had struggled so persistently to acquire was only allusion, to be swept aside by her revived passions? Recalling the anguish of those months, she wrote later to Claude:

I was terrified of having been deceived; I believed that I had no real virtue and that my passion had only been dormant from the beginning of my interior life up to my present difficulties. It seemed to me that I had no solid basis for virtue, that all my so-called peace had been an illusion; or that if I had actually been the recipient of favors and graces that I had lost them all through my own fault and my lack of correspondence.

These then are the caprices which afflict the poor soul. One time I was afraid that these imperfect feelings and emotions were built into my very nature, coming straight from my bloodstream; thus I felt so utterly abandoned that, if God had not come to my aid, my health would have been seriously affected; for it was winter, which is very cold in this country.

Much that had hitherto seemed to her acts of zeal or humility, she now felt had been motivated by pride and complacency. She for whom candor was as natural as breathing began to find vestiges of hypocrisy in her actions. It seemed to her that self-love insinuated itself everywhere, "into the very citadel of God," as she wrote to Claude, "always under the false shadow of charity, zeal, piety, the glory of God." In this anxious state of mind she found herself strongly tempted to scrupulosity. The devil had chosen his time well for this most insidious of temptations, and yet it was one temptation that Marie never succumbed to, no matter how spiritually disturbed she was. "The goodness of God preserved me from this evil," she wrote, adding that always at the depths of her soul she was able to maintain that clarity of vision which enabled her to distinguish instinctively the true from the false.

Day after day she begged God to deliver her from this suffering which seemed beyond her endurance, yet for her answer she saw only more clearly the purity necessary for the soul who seeks union with God. It was not the first time that she had felt this apparent abandonment by God. She had long known the terror and loneliness of living in darkness with nothing but faith, pure and un-

adorned, to cling to. It was precisely such an experience which had driven her almost to the brink of suicide while she was still a novice in Tours; it had been her constant spiritual state even after she took her vows. Yet the trials which God let fall upon her seemed always commensurate with her degree of consecration; and now that she had given Him all in the full totality of dedicated love, the suffering He imposed on her took on a new scope.

In the past there had always been someone to turn to, someone from whom she could seek direction, who would give her the security of obedience. But in those first years in Canada she was alone. More than alone, actually, for it was she who was to direct and strengthen the others. She was to be their solace, their support. She was to make the decisions, provide the answers, implement the resolutions. She was to be firm, resolute, optimistic. "Comfort the fainthearted, strengthen the weak, be patient toward all," she read each week in the Rule of St. Augustine as he outlined the duties of superiors. Never had she needed God so much; yet when she reached out her hands to Him, He was as elusive and impalpable as air. And this must be her secret. "I suffered alone," she wrote later to Claude, catching in the single phrase the full anguish of a pain that must be hidden and masked, that must never be permitted to take its toll of anyone except herself. She revealed her heart when she wrote that year to Mother St. Bernard at Tours, "It seems to me that I can say without any hesitation, 'My Jesus is crucified and I am crucified with him.'"

In a letter to Claude written in 1644 she assured him that her health remained good despite the difficult climate and the differences in diet; except for bouts of headache she had no physical infirmities to complain of. "All my infirmities are spiritual," she added tellingly, "and as a consequence they are much more difficult to cure." A pall of constraint fell over everything she did; she felt it in her relations with seculars, with her own community, as well as in prayer. Her natural spontaneity, which had always made her such a charming companion, seemed to have shriveled up. She herself says that she could think of nothing to say at recreation; although she admired her Sisters and wanted to contribute to the conversation, she seemed paralyzed before them. In an effort to describe this state to her former superior at Tours, she wrote; "Picture to yourself the poorest, the most miserable, the

most ignorant and abandoned in the whole world; that is what I was like." One day, overwhelmed at the sight of her infidelities, she put on a hair shirt, wearing it without interruption for several days. But this desire for reparative mortification only brought her further humiliation. When Father Le Jeune, who was then their confessor, came to hear her confession he accused her of acting impulsively and outside the prescription of obedience. Desperately she asked that he permit her to make a general confession; and once again without any other preparation except the Spirit of God, which moved clearly within her, she begged forgiveness for all the sins of her life. "Treat me mercilessly," she begged of God, "be inexorable with me, consume in me everything which violates Your purity."

This was the state of her soul when Jerome Lalemant assumed the Superiorship of the Mission in the fall of 1645. From the beginning he seemed to have the insight to recognize the unusual quality of the soul before him. He was never easy with her; often his words were far more rigorous than those of Father Le Jeune. But Marie felt that she was understood; she had found at last someone in whom she could confide; someone who, like herself, had but a single driving force: the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom. The long years clouded with loneliness and uncertainty were over; although she still had much to suffer, she had been shown a haven in which she could find shelter. Reading through the various papers which Father Lalemant has left to posterity, one cannot but be amazed that Marie could find such trust and understanding in this zealous priest who seems always to be drawing the line just a thread too fine—this administrator with his passion for detail and his fanatic obsession that everything always be executed perfectly. Yet for Marie, none of this mattered; she found something deep and true which made this man her confidant and guide from whom nothing was ever to be hidden.

CHAPTER 14

Jerome Lalemant, saint and scholar though he undoubtedly was, was also an administrator par excellence. He was that unique type of man who, while having his eyes set on far sights, missed none of the details at his feet. He was a man who liked things done according to the book—and well done. Nothing rings with truer satisfaction than the terse phrase recorded in his *Journal*: "*Omnia bene fecit.*" Such approbation is not frequently found, for the slightest fault, the most trivial carelessness was enough to evoke his condemnation. A crooked candle, a mishandling of the incense boat, a false note sung by the nervous deacon during the long *Exultet* of the Holy Saturday ceremony were enough for him to note "*male fecit.*" He tolerated nothing but the best either in himself or in those under his care. While this punctiliousness did not win him universal approbation, Marie thrived under it. She found in him her own high ideals matched and encouraged.

It took him but a short time after assuming the superiority to pull his organizational apparatus into the best possible working order. In addition to the copious material written for the yearly *Relations*, Lalemant began the *Jesuit Journal*, a strictly community organ, which recorded the day-by-day events of the colony.¹ Written entirely for private consumption, it has nothing about it of the propagandist flavor of the *Relations*; and, as a consequence, it provides the historian with a vivid and unadulterated account of the trivia as well as the large-scale events which went into each day's living.

The *Journal* indicates that Lalemant left nothing to chance; the men under him were assessed and strategically placed where they could accomplish the most, according to their individual talents. The devotional aspects of Lent of 1646 were planned to the last detail. In addition to the sermons at the parish church,

Lalemant planned semiweekly instructions to be given at both convents. He himself would take care of the preaching at the Ursulines on Wednesdays and Sundays, while that at the Hôtel Dieu would be divided between Fathers Vimont and Dendemare. Never since their arrival at the mission had the nuns enjoyed such a full Lenten celebration. In addition to the usual Wednesday and Friday devotions, special ceremonies were held on Passion Sunday for the dedication of the chapel of the Hôtel Dieu under the patronage of Notre Dame de Pitié. Three days later, on the feast of St. Joseph, the Ursulines had their chance for a grandiose celebration. Mother St. Joseph was in her glory. Although the High Mass and Vespers were held in the parish church, the religious could hear the cannonade which accompanied the elevation; and in the afternoon the entire population was invited to the Ursulines' small chapel for Benediction. Here special motets in honor of St. Joseph were added to the usual hymns, with the full-throated congregation alternating with the sweet but pathetically meager volume of the nuns' choir.

Easter was a beautiful day, and the inhabitants of Quebec gave full voice to the traditional *O Filii* with that peculiar satisfaction of a Lent well spent. They felt particularly free with their alleluias as they recalled the hours of sermons and ceremonies with which Father Lalemant had filled the last days of Holy Week. It was April; spring was here, the ice was beginning to break on the river, and within weeks they could hope to see the full-bellied sails of the early fleet breasting the river current.

In the monastery on the hill, Easter was full with the zest of living. Never had life seemed like such a God-given gift, for in the dark winter months the religious feared that Marie was going to be taken from them; but now she was theirs again, strong and joyous and alive as ever. "At the moment, I am better than ever," she was to write to Claude several months later, "and ready to go to any corner of the earth where obedience would send me."

Despite her rapid recovery, everyone was aware of the seriousness of her illness. As soon as she could, Mother St. Joseph wrote to Claude that his mother had been attacked with renal colic. It had been a severe bout accompanied by a dizzying fever which none of the primitive devices of bleeding or herbal preparations had been able to abate. In an agony of pain from

which she could find no relief, Marie smiled through it all, obedient to the follies which medicine imposed and peacefully resigned to the will of God. She thought she was going to die—and the thought was very sweet. During those feverish and pain-filled days, God delivered her from all the interior anguish and bitterness which had been her portion for so long. Seeing the door of heaven opening a little before her, she grew restless with longing. She loved as she had never loved before. All the grace so hardly won in deprivation and suffering was suddenly poured upon her. God was hers again, uniquely and wonderfully. Even while her body grew weaker, she was alive with love, a love a thousand times deeper and truer and more gratefully understanding because of the burden of desolation she had sustained.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, her fever had dropped, and with this turn of events the door of heaven swung slowly shut. Now when she turned her head, her eyes rested only on the thin pine partition which formed her cell. How small and cold the world looked with its bustle and talk. How foolish and stiff-necked the clamor for fame and honor and worldly success. It was not easy to pick up the stuff of which her life was woven, to handle the tools of earth again when her eyes had seen a little of the vision of heaven. No wonder that she would write to Claude the following October, "Ever since my illness, I have felt myself completely detached from everything—so much so that purely external affairs are a great suffering to me."

And yet she was thrown into the very hub of external affairs, for the summer of 1646 was a busy time for the colony. In May the Ursuline chapel was the scene of the baptism of a fairly important Huron, Arenh'ton; under the patronage of René Chartier, the chaplain of the Ursulines, he received the name René with the hope, perhaps, that this would be a constant reminder of his Christian obligations. Early in June another Indian was brought to the convent, but this time the occasion was less edifying. The visitor, an unnamed woman, was brought as a prisoner to live out the sentence imposed on her by the Christian chiefs at Sillery. Her offense: a domestic battle of bloody proportions in which her husband was found to bear some measure of the guilt. Both parties were condemned to be chained and to live on bread and water for three days; his sen-

tence was to be executed in the dungeon of the Fort while his wife was to be incarcerated with the Ursulines. Having an erring spouse added to their already heterogeneous menage could not have given the nuns any great pleasure, although in the end the affair seemed to have been managed quietly enough. Marie, writing of it later to Claude, indicated that the woman was well behaved, even refusing the fur pelt she was offered for sleeping, replying that she wanted to suffer for what she had done.

With the feast of Corpus Christi arose one of those problems which was to take on such enormous proportions later on: a problem of rank. Since both the Ursulines and the Hôtel Dieu could not have full liturgical services on all the big feasts because of the demands made on the mission personnel, on what basis was the decision to be made? The unhesitating answer of the seventeenth century was, of course, rank. But how one was to decide precedence between two groups of religious who had sailed and embarked at exactly the same time was a bit difficult to establish. The nuns of the Hôtel Dieu, however, were able to weight their cause by recalling to Father Lalemant that the Duchess of Aiguillon had given orders for the building of their house two years before any negotiations had begun for the Ursulines. Father Lalemant acceded to this position and noted in his *Journal*: "This give the Hospital nuns the privilege of the first place."² From then on, all processions stopped first at the Hospital and only then at the Ursulines; and on big feast days Benediction was given at the Hospital and only the following day at the Ursulines—although it is to be noted that Father Lalemant did his best to provide some system of alternation.

When the feast of St. Ignatius arrived, Lalemant proved himself a master diplomat: High Mass at seven in the parish church; solemn Vespers at the Ursulines; Benediction at the Hôtel Dieu. But it was, even with this nice division of honors, definitely a day for the Ursulines. Despite their poverty they invited for dinner all the Jesuits at Quebec and at Sillery as well. Father Lalemant implied much of the sacrifice behind the scenes when he noted: "The Ursulines treated us royally that day." He had, however, less favorable comments to make concerning his Jesuit brethren from Sillery who, though conspicuous at the elaborate dinner, were singularly absent at both the sermon and Vespers

which followed. The affair put the superior in a rather difficult position, since he was the one who had given the sermon. That evening he wrote in his *Journal* with some annoyance, "I was kept from saying anything by the fact that it was I who had preached the sermon—although this ought not to have stopped me, and another time I will be obliged to speak."³

The whole month of July was a confused mélange of joy and sorrow at the monastery. The fleet that year brought with it a young man, called simply "Jacques," who was to become the Ursulines' gardener. Having their own "Frère Jacques" (as the annalist refers to him) gave the Ursulines great hope for their vegetable garden—an essential means for allaying the mounting cost of provisions. But Frère Jacques' first act with shovel and spade was to break ground not for a garden but for a grave. On July 8, a little Indian girl named Charité died in the nuns' arms. She was not quite six years old and had been one of Mother St. Joseph's little charges from the age of two and a half, when her mother, a baptized Huron, had died. About a year before, her father, François Xavier Nenaskoumat, who had been badly wounded near Montreal, was brought at Marie's instigation to the Hôtel Dieu. There Charité was brought to him, and his dying eyes looked with wonder and awe at the sedate little figure in her French pinafore. She seemed like a miracle to him, and he wondered if someday she might perhaps become a nun. The Ursulines wondered, too, and Marie wrote of her, "She has the loveliest soul I have yet seen since we have come to Canada." François Xavier kissed her good-by with a tenderness not often seen in Indian fathers, little realizing that her death was to follow so soon upon his own. It was the old story among the savages—a kind of pneumonia leading to tuberculosis. For seven months she lingered, weak and wasted with fever, while the anguished heart of her mistress, Mother St. Joseph, looked helplessly on. Finally, unable to talk and hardly to breathe, she replied to the whispered question, "Do you love God?"—"Oh, yes, I love Him with all my heart." The next day her little body was carried by four of the Ursulines' servants and laid to rest beside her father in the French cemetery.

Was death to claim all their most promising boarders? the nuns wondered, as they watched the little funeral procession wend its

way out of sight. Two years ago it had been Agnes, bright, docile, and extremely capable for her age. Marie had written of her to Claude, "We had thought she might become a religious, for she showed the ability for it; but now she is dead." And their Thérèse, dominating little apostle that she was, still lived on as a captive among the Iroquois. It is easy to see why Marie was moved to write again and again that only a deeply supernatural spirit would be strong enough to work on undismayed in the Canadian Mission.

It seemed that Canada was to be a source of contradiction abroad as well as at home, for unbeknown to its inhabitants great plans had been afoot during the winter of 1646 to provide Quebec with a bishop. For some time there had been talk of an ecclesiastical appointment of this nature, although no practical steps had been taken. But during the winter that Marie lay ill, Thomas Le Gauffre, a wealthy and pious priest who was also a member of the Montreal Association, was inspired to set aside a large part of his fortune for the establishment of a Canadian bishopric. Those to whom he mentioned his proposition not only encouraged him, but felt that Le Gauffre himself was eminently suitable for the post. The subject was brought before the King's ecclesiastical council, of whom Vincent de Paul and Cardinal Mazarin were the pre-eminent members. The council saw no objection to the plan, but felt that before anything concrete were done the advice of the Jesuits should be sought.⁴ Their answer was at best evasive. While they offered no objection to the person of Le Gauffre, they did have grave reservations concerning the opportuneness of establishing a bishopric at that particular moment. Le Gauffre himself, never an ambitious man and rather bewildered at finding himself the primary candidate for the proposed bishopric, announced that he intended to make a retreat before consenting to having his name sent to Rome. His retreat, undertaken to discern God's will, came to a sudden and incontrovertible conclusion: on March 21, he was struck dead by a fit of apoplexy and the scheme which he had initiated for a Canadian bishopric died with him.

When the summer fleet brought news to Quebec of the abortive plan, the Mission Fathers were relieved to find that it had ended as it did; and Marie shared their sentiments. A certain

friction was already felt between Quebec and Montreal; and the young colony, still so uncertain of its goals and ideals, needed the firm hand of a united clergy. In the present circumstances it seemed to Marie that the best possible course was to leave the Jesuits in control. It was in this vein that she wrote to Claude in the fall of this same year: "As far as I am concerned, I feel that God does not want a bishop in Canada yet; the country is still in its beginnings and, since it is our Fathers who have planted the seed of Christianity, it seems best to let them cultivate it for a little while longer before sending anyone who might possibly act contrary to their plans."

Indeed, to those living on the spot, the thought of establishing a bishopric seemed almost ludicrous, for in 1646 there were moments when the Mission of New France seemed doomed to extinction. Daily the Iroquois menace loomed larger and more imminent. Even two years before, the Jesuits of the Huron Mission had found themselves cut off from their headquarters in Quebec. River traffic had become mortally dangerous, and the priests had been forced to make their own hosts and wine from the grapes and grain which they were able to cultivate. The plight of the Hurons was pitiful; and Jerome Lalemant, at that time Superior of the Huron Mission, wrote sorrowfully in his annual report to the French Provincial: "Where eight years ago we saw eighty or a hundred cabins, now we see only five or six; a captain who formerly commanded eight hundred warriors now has no more than thirty or forty; and in place of the fleets which used to number three or four hundred canoes, we now see only twenty or thirty."⁵ What had happened to the Hurons in whose friendship Quebec had placed such hope? They were either dead, captured by the Iroquois, or in flight. Driven by terror and hunger, they fled eastward through the forests, confident with the hope of primitive ingenuousness that, once in Quebec, they would be taken care of. During this period, Marie had written to Claude:

Three hundred Indian refugees took shelter near our house this winter. They were instructed in our chapel except for those who still were not in the proper disposition to hear God spoken of. Outside of this basic instruction, the women and girls came to our classes and the men came to our parlor where, after a little spiritual food, we did our best to provide some nourish-

ment for the body as well. Our Governor has shown very great charity to them during this time. He is the kindest person you would ever want to see. Yet even so, the poor people thought they would all starve to death. This is what compelled me to ask for alms from our friends in France—not for ourselves but for our poor savages, or rather for Jesus Christ.

That spring, less than a year after Father Jogues had escaped from his tormentors, Father Joseph Bressani was taken captive by the Iroquois. He had left Three Rivers for Huron territory on April 27 accompanied by a young French boy and six Christian savages. Three days later all eight of them were in Iroquois hands; pinioned and dazed, they were pushed along the trails which they knew so well led only to mutilation and death. Yet somehow Bressani, always quick-witted, managed to leave along the way a piece of bark on which he had written a warning that the Iroquois had plans for attacking Sillery. The scribbled signs were enough to put the French on their guard, and they did their best to fortify the little mission. Actually, the Iroquois, observing that their plans had become known, did not attack the village but continued their usual custom of making their stealthy incursions on those out-of-the-way posts where they were least expected.

For several anxious weeks Quebec waited for further news of Father Bressani, but it was not until July that an escaped Huron came to tell the Jesuits that the Father was still alive. Henry Stonstrats, with his back bearing the telltale scars of fire and the stumps of his fingers still festering and unhealed, was a silent witness to what Father Bressani himself continued to endure. For four months he suffered on, until he was finally sold to the Dutch for three hundred francs. Later, writing a report of his captivity for the Father General of the Jesuits, he observed succinctly: "I would never have believed that a human being could suffer so much."⁶

Yet less than a year later, in the company of Father Antoine Poncet, he was again setting out for the Huron Mission. The time between he had spent devising means of winning an entry among the Iroquois. "A truly apostolic man," Marie had commented about him earlier; but even she was startled when one day in the summer of 1645, he arrived at the convent parlor

to ask a favor of her. He unwrapped a large package that he carried and explained simply that it was material which he had managed to beg. Would her nuns be able to do some sewing for him? He wanted the stuff fashioned into clothes for the Iroquois. He knew a means by which he could get them to them. That this man who had, as she wrote, "suffered a thousand deaths in pain and agony" should solicit so lovingly for his tormentors, left even Marie silent. She noted only, "We made them up for him, and he sent them on."

As the peril increased, military help was repeatedly solicited from France, and in the summer of 1644 twenty-two French soldiers came to swell the ranks of the Canadian militia. Grateful though they were for any assistance, the colonists could not but comment on the pitiful inadequacy of the answer to their pleas. While they were willing to make allowances for the troubles which France was having at home, yet they were not so guileless as to be unaware of the exploitation to which they were being subjected. Had the Company of the Hundred Associates lived up to its contract, New France would number close to three thousand colonists instead of its meager three hundred. The following year, 1645, the Company was forced to relinquish some of its rights to the foremost Canadian citizens but at the same time to burden them with the responsibility of paying annually one thousand pounds of beaver skins in addition to assuming the costs for bringing out twenty colonists a year. At least the principle of trade monopoly was broken; but it was not until 1663 that the Company was at last forced by royal order to admit its negligence and concede its charter.

Meanwhile, alarm over the Indian peril grew apace in France, and the Archbishop of Tours, Victor Le Bouthilier de Rancé, uncle of the future reformer, felt a particular responsibility for the Ursulines of Quebec. Sometimes during that year he wrote to Marie indicating that she was perfectly free to return to France with her religious and even sending her a letter of obedience to this effect should she wish to use it. Marie, however, felt that the storm through which they were living was only temporary and that to withdraw to France now would be to sacrifice the very heart of her existence. In her reply to the Archbishop, she attempted to palliate the picture of horror and bloodshed which

had been painted for him, but ended decisively, "No, nothing under heaven could take me away from this place, which is my native element and my earthly paradise."

The summer months of 1645 brought great hope to the little colony that victory might come to them peacefully after all. As early as April of that year, there seemed to be some effort going on among the Iroquois to establish amicable relations. In July lengthy conferences were held in Three Rivers attended by De Montmagny and his advisers. The usual presents were exchanged; the usual Indian harangues, acknowledged. At the end, the Iroquois spokesmen announced that they were going home to present the terms to their tribes but would return in September to establish a permanent treaty of peace. Meanwhile, the recently appointed Council of Three, consisting of the Governor General at Quebec, the Governor of Ville Marie, and the Superior General of the Missions, worked indefatigably at the delicate business of assessing the actual intentions of the wily and devious Iroquois. From whatever information they could garner, it seemed that this time the savages were actually sincere in their overtures. While some of the more experienced of the colonists were wary of the proposed peace, the Council felt it must accept seriously and without suspicion the proposals made by the Indians. In mid-September final negotiations were completed, and on September 20 the actual peace treaty was signed.

The inhabitants were delirious with joy, and overnight Quebec was transformed into a city of peace, of security, and of hope. Marie breathed with relief at the assurance that the inspiration which had moved her to reject Archbishop Le Bouthilier's offer of a safe passage back to France was actually from God. What the omen of peace meant to that fear-infested city is difficult to reconstruct, but reading Marie's account written to Claude that same month we can catch to some extent the exhilaration of hope which swept through the streets. For her, the peace portended far more than personal safety—although her maternal heart is profoundly grateful for that; peace is the essential condition for the preaching of the Gospel, for the extension of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The peace with the savages seems like a miracle from heaven; for, humanly speaking, we couldn't have hoped for it because

of the great obstacles that stood in the way of its accomplishment. We are completely obliged to God for it, who by this means has opened the door to the Gospel. You can imagine the unspeakable joy we feel at this great grace through which which we are on the eve of seeing the Kingdom of God extended throughout the pagan peoples of America. We who have seen and experienced the persecutions of the infidels are doubly conscious of the delight of being delivered from such a heavy yoke—and one which was so opposed to the glory of God. Beg Our Lord to strengthen this peace, for the devil, who is being driven out of his kingdom, will play his last stake to stir up trouble so that things will be worse than before.

For Marie, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ had become everything. Outside of it there was no reason for existence; within it there was nothing which could not be endured. This was the heart of her own spiritual life; it was the motive force behind the school; it was the reason for the hardships, the privations, the loneliness which daily she watched her religious endure. The whole world with its grandeur and trivialities was drawn into this single focus. When she heard in the following years that the Jesuits had discovered new tribes beyond the Iroquois, living along the borders of the Great Lakes, it meant only one thing to her and she wrote enthusiastically to a friend in Tours: "New lands and new tribes have been discovered and the light of the Gospel is going to be brought to them. These new discoveries give us great hope for the progress of Christianity." And to Claude the same year she wrote: "My single wish is the progress and completion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ." When in August of 1646, Father Gabriel Druillettes, the first priest to be sent to the Abenakis, came to say good-by before starting on the long journey which would take him to the Mission of L'Assomption, she had no difficulty in understanding the look of joy in his eyes. It was with a kind of envy that she wrote, ". . . he took his leave with as much gaiety as though he were going to Paradise." In 1654, looking back over her missionary labors, she herself found the metaphor which explained in a single stroke the dominating influence of her apostolic life: "From the time of my missionary vocation in Canada, all the the phrases and passages [of the Gospel] which deal with the domain and the amplification of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and of the im-

portance of the salvation of souls for whom He had shed His blood, were for me like arrows which pierced my heart."

It was then with indescribable joy that she received the news of the peace, which meant not only freedom from peril but freedom to sow the seed of the Gospel as far as her loving arms could reach. The boarding school was doing well; and the nuns found that despite the rigors of a Quebec winter, this was the most fruitful time for their apostolic labors. In the fall of 1646, she wrote happily to Claude of the progress that was being made among the Hurons:

This year our little boarding school has had as much business as in the preceding years. Winter is our best harvest time, for the savages leave their children with us to be instructed while they go off to hunt for six months. This time is very precious, for in the summer we have a much smaller number since this is the time when mothers and children will not be separated—the latter being used to help in the fields with the Indian corn and with the dressing of beaver pelts. However, we always have enough of them to keep us busy.

The Hurons who have come down here are continually at our parlor, which is the place designated for their instruction. This is the special mission of Mother St. Joseph, who knows the language. Our neophytes and catechumens have taken her for their mother.

The French school flourished as well; and since the pupils of this department were asked to pay what they could, it provided a little revenue with which to maintain the indigent Indians. Even the French settlers, however, dealt but rarely with actual coin; and most of the families paid for their daughters' education in produce. It is small wonder that Marie's head often ached as she pored over the account books, which included such entries as the following:

For the board of Mademoiselle C

Received January 13:	3½ cords of firewood
Received March 16:	4 cords of firewood
Received March 13:	a 12-lb. pot of butter
Received November 13:	1 fat pig
	1 barrel of peas
	1 barrel of salted eels ⁷

Often the French children were as poor as the Indians; but Marie, determined that no financial difficulty would ever keep the children from her door, accepted them all the same. Claude, discussing his mother's attitude toward the poor, wrote:

The French who had fallen into poverty felt continually the effects of her charity. She took their children into the boarding school, where they were boarded and educated free, receiving everything they needed just as though they had paid large fees. Her charity went even further, for when these girls were old enough to be on their own, she gave them everything she could to help them.⁸

The Indian girls often remained an expense even after they had finished their normal schooling. In order to arrange good Christian marriages for them, the Ursulines frequently assumed the responsibility of providing dowries. Sometimes, although not often, one of their Indian boarders married a white man, and then an even more extravagant dowry had to be provided.⁹ There was good reason why the expenses at the monastery always outran the limited income.

Early that spring there were further negotiations with the Iroquois, and in April, De Montmagny met with Lalemant to discuss a proposal which the Indians had introduced the summer before and were not repeating: could a Black Robe be sent among them? De Montmagny saw the advantages of acquiescing to their request. Such a course would indicate that the French were willing to trust the sincerity of the Iroquois and might do much to cement the still tenuous peace. Such an ambassador must, of course, be a man of courage, prudence, and experience. The Governor's choice was obvious: would Lalemant permit Isaac Jogues, now residing at Montreal, to return to the Iroquois as the Governor's personal ambassador? Awed at what his consent involved, Lalemant acceded, knowing full well the scope of the sacrifice he was exacting, but knowing even better the heroic dedication of the priest of whom it was being asked.

As the ice broke and the river was again free for navigation, Father Lalemant sat down to write one of the most difficult letters of his life: the letter was addressed to Reverend Isaac Jogues, informing him that, in secret council and dependent upon his own consent, he had been appointed ambassador to the

Iroquois. The reply which Father Jogues wrote on May 2 contained the answer which Lalemant at once feared and expected: "Would you believe that when I first read Your Reverence's letter my heart was seized with terror? Poor nature which remembers the past so well trembled; but Our Lord, in His goodness, has given me a calm which outweighs my fears. Yes, Reverend Father, I want what Our Lord wants, at the cost of a thousand lives."¹⁰

Within two weeks Isaac Jogues was on his way to the Iroquois in the company of Jean Bourdon, a prominent Quebec colonist and father of Genevieve, who six years later was to be the Ursulines' first Canadian postulant. Their visit lasted only about six weeks, and by July they were back in Quebec to assess with the Governor the fruits of their ambassage. They had been accepted at least without hostility, a general council had convened to welcome them and offer them the usual presents and speeches. What permanent value it all had was difficult to say, although any measure which would lead to a permanent peace would be of inestimable value. On July 9, Lalemant held a Jesuit council meeting attended by those experienced missionaries, Fathers Le Jeune and Vimont as well as by Jogues himself. A second expedition was decided upon, and final plans were organized. A week later Jogues returned to Montreal and from there traveled to Three Rivers, which was to be his point of departure. Before he left, he visited the Ursulines. Shy and reticent, he said little either about the sufferings of the past nor his fears and aspirations for the future. Writing of him that fall to Claude, Marie noted: "He has already sanctified it [the Iroquois territory] by his heroic virtues, which will never be really known until the Day of Judgment, for he hides everything in his humble silence." Despite his personal reserve, Jogues brought joyful news to the Ursulines. During his last expedition he had met their little Thérèse, who was in her fourth year of captivity among the Iroquois. He had encountered her in the midst of a fishing expedition and had the happiness of finding her still faithful to her baptism. Of this providential encounter Marie wrote: "He spoke with her privately, questioned her, instructed her, and exhorted her to have courage, for the time of her liberation would soon come."

On September 24, accompanied by a young *donné* from Dieppe, Jean Lalande, Jogues embarked upon the St. Lawrence. It was

that season of the year when those northern forests took on an unparalleled grandeur. The trees rose to new heights, flinging their copper magic against the sky. It was a time for living, fully and freely. Life called with a kind of clamor, and Isaac Jogues in his last nights beneath a cabin roof heard it clearly. His answer was a letter to a Jesuit in France with whom he had made his tertianship. The veil of silence, which Marie had noted, was lifted and he spoke freely of all that he had hidden in his heart:

Pray, Father, that He will do whatever He wants with me and that I will be a man according to His heart. . . . Pray that He will enlarge my poor heart a little which still remains so narrow, and that through my past experiences and the lavish outpouring of His goodness and mercy upon me, I will learn at last to trust myself completely to Him so that I will throw myself lovingly into the arms of His divine and fatherly Providence . . . and when you are at the altar, please remember a poor priest who is on the eve of being without the Holy Sacrifice for eight or nine months.¹¹

But the deprivation which he feared most—that of being without the Sacrifice of the Mass—was one which ultimately was never asked of him. For less than a month later, Father Jogues was dead, killed by a single and merciful hatchet blow.

Throughout the winter no news reached Quebec, and it was not until early June of the following year that word came to the mission that Father Jogues was dead, as they had come to fear. "*Ibo et non redibo*," Jogues had written the previous year in one of those moments of clairvoyance which God seemed to permit frequently in the lives of his Canadian martyrs. But he had gone. Knowing as no other living man could know what awaited him, he had gone. To Marie this was the wonder and the joy of it. She recalled their conversations together, seeing once again the thin sensitive face, the mangled hands which he tried to conceal in the folds of his worn cassock. To her the most impressive aspect of Father Jogues' death had been not simply the heroic quality of his acts but the heroic quality of his confidence in God.

This was the single dominating thought in all her letters of this year; this was the vision she would share with Claude, who

still worried her with his timidity, his perpetual self-examination, his apparent inability to abandon himself to God in love.

Why do you not let yourself become more intimate with so good and loving a God? I assure you that if you keep looking at Him as a formidable judge, you will have to hide yourself at the bottom of an abyss—even beneath the feet of Lucifer himself. And if you consider Him as a Father, He will demand respect and obedience. But He is our Spouse, and in this role, as St. Bernard says, He asks of us only a return of love. And still more—and our own hearts will teach us this lesson of love—we must be completely transformed into Him who is nothing else but love. What a lovely lesson this is! It is enough to keep his disciples in a continual colloquy. If through human weakness or the demands of duty, they fall into some error, they wait with tranquillity the object of their love and then begin once again with ever more determination their conversation with their beloved.

Nothing, she maintains, is sufficient cause to destroy this confidence, to keep the soul at a distance from its only love. Temptations, trials in prayer, "God permits them only to try your fidelity," she wrote to an old friend, adding with unshakable faith, "Be faithful, then, confident that His Divine Majesty lets Himself be found by those who persevere." It was courageous advice from one who even as she wrote continued her own desperate battle against discouragement and desolation.

Permitting herself no quarter, neither would she be lax with those who were dearest to her. Writing with some asperity to her niece, she cautions, "And don't excuse yourself because of your age; even if you are young it is to be expected that you would have better sense." But despite the occasional flashes of steel in her words, they were never devoid of compassion and understanding. There is nothing but loving solicitude in the long pages which discuss in amazing detail the trials, the temptations, the possible solutions of her niece's spiritual life. Having told her aunt the list of faults which had been pointed out to her, she received in reply a candid and personal appraisal:

The two imperfections which you say you notice in yourself and which are your special weaknesses will never be completely corrected until you become a really spiritual person. Both of

these have their foundation in your natural temperament. . . . They have told you the truth that in this you resemble me, for when I was young I was the most complacent person in the world, and I had—and still have—a certain natural impetuosity in my actions. But all of this is turned to good when one becomes accustomed to perform one's actions in the presence of the Spirit. What I mean to say is that you must be on your guard, and when you notice this complacency you must turn to Jesus with a loving word according to the grace He gives you. As for the judgment of creatures, take no pleasure except in the order of charity; when there is a question of trifling or imperfection you must pass above all human respect. You may not be as much loved as others, but you will be dearer to God and more esteemed by the wise and holy. It is never necessary to go looking for esteem; it will naturally follow grace and virtue. You tell me that affection for this vain esteem grows within you; alas, my dear child, a good look at yourself should be enough to convince you immediately that the attitude of soul that esteems what it sees in itself and wants others to esteem it is the most foolish thing in the world. The weakness that each one finds in herself should be sufficient proof of this.

Honor, rank, success—she was impatient of them all, and particularly impatient with consecrated souls who still concerned themselves with such things. For her there was only the Kingdom of God and the salvation of souls. Once, long before, she had prayed in her narrow French cell: In spirit "I go around the whole world in search of all those souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ." And now the world stretched before her while at her very gates stood all those souls waiting with hungry eyes for her to feed them. This was her life. What other reality was there?

CHAPTER 15

August 15, 1647, was one of the happiest days of Marie's life; for God in one of His unexpected and loving gestures, removed from her that desolation and bitterness of heart which she had sustained for almost eight years. This deliverance, so free and so spontaneous, she always credited to Our Lady, on whose feast day it occurred. Writing an account of this for Father Lalemant some years later, she relates:

I still continued to endure the revolt of my passions and temptations to aversion until the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in 1647, when I was strongly inspired to beg this Divine Mother to obtain my deliverance if this would be to the glory of her dearly beloved Son. . . . I felt then what the Spirit of God wanted me to say to this Divine Mother. I was heard; [my suffering] dropped from me like a cloak and peace flowed through all the sensitive part of my soul. My aversion was transformed into a sincere love for all the persons toward whom I had felt an antipathy and against whom I had bitterly rebelled. Whenever occasion arose, I rendered them all the services I possibly could. . . .

It is impossible to express the peace and tranquillity which I enjoyed in seeing myself completely freed from my bonds and re-established in everything that I thought had been lost. Not only did I recognize this but experienced as well the realization that, far from losing anything, I had amassed indescribable treasures. I knew now that what had deprived me of the sight of the blessings which I possessed in my intimate union with my Spouse were the ashes which had hidden the fire and light in order that I might advance in the fundamental virtues which hitherto I had not possessed in the degree which His Divine Majesty had desired.

She emerged from this experience "a completely different creature," as she herself described it, filled with "an extraordinary sweetness." From the whole wealth of the Gospels, one passage in particular attracted her as a magnet: "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart." She could hardly believe that the pain was gone at last. Like a person who has suffered a long sickness, she walked cautiously, almost gingerly, fearful that the next moment, the next occupation, might bring with it a return of her old malady. But it was not so. She was free; and with that certainty came a new and reckless surge of confidence in this God of goodness who had never forgotten her, never deserted her. Her heart was still singing when sometime later she wrote to one of her Sisters, "He will never leave those who treat Him as a friend and who prefer Him to all things and even to themselves."

Whatever sense of conflict she had noted in the past between her exterior work and her interior life seemed to be resolved by this new grace. Although her attraction for prayer was more insistent than ever, she observed now that no matter what the absorbing nature of her work, it was never able to disturb the current of her union with God. When she explained this to Father Lalemant, his advice was specific and definitive: No matter where her personal attraction lay, she was never to refuse any involvement in temporal affairs, since basically it did not affect her union with God. So she continued managing the accounts, directing the workmen, arranging for provisions, in addition to teaching the children and instructing the older Indians. She found her natural capacity for work utilized to the fullest. And as always, her own interior joy added new power to her energies and new alacrity to her native generosity.

In addition to their labors for the apostolate, the Ursulines, and Marie in particular, were still caught up in the difficult business of drawing up a constitution for the Canadian Mission. A year earlier, on November 21, 1646, the monastery had received three postulants: Madeleine de Chauvigny de la Peltrie, their foundress; Charlotte Barré, her companion, and, as a coadjutrix Sister, Catherine Lézeau, originally from La Rochelle but who had been for sometime in Montreal, where Madame de la Peltrie had met her.¹ Despite the great joy at the addition of

three new subjects to their ranks, the nuns realized that by the time of their profession there would have to be some specific settlement concerning their constitutions if they were to be empowered to receive subjects.

No matter how heavy the burdens of teaching and nursing and building became, the paramount concern in Marie's eyes was this question of a definitive rule. As early as the summer of 1646, she had received authorization from the various congregations involved to inaugurate plans for drawing up a rule which would obtain for the religious of the Canadian Mission only. In February of 1647, Father Lalemant was seriously at work on this matter, assisted by Father de Brébeuf, who was detained in Quebec because the Iroquois continued to make the St. Lawrence unnavigable. They were a valuable pair to which to entrust the work: Jean de Brébeuf with his vast mission experience, and Jerome Lalemant with his native practicality and capacity for detailed organization. By July of 1647 all was settled, and on the feast of St. Ignatius, celebrated as always with great solemnity, the members of the Ursuline monastery received the Constitutions which they were henceforth to follow.²

Thus, on November 21, 1648, the Ursuline monastery had its first ceremony of profession when Charlotte Barré, known as Charlotte de St. Ignace, and Catherine Lézeau, known as Catherine de St. Ursule, pronounced their vows. For the first time the New World heard the words of the ancient formulary:

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and in honor of His most holy Mother, of our blessed Father St. Augustine, of blessed St. Ursula, our patron, I, Charlotte Barré de St. Ignace, make religious profession, vowing and promising to God in the presence of the whole heavenly court and of all those here present, and into the hands of Reverend Father Jerome Lalemant, Superior of the Missions of the Company of Jesus in this country, holding the place of our superior, as also into the hands of Reverend Mother Marquerite de St. Athanase, superior of this monastery, and of the persons who will succeed her, perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to work for the instruction of both French and Indian children, according to the Rule of St. Augustine, as interpreted by the constitutions of this Monastery of St. Joseph of the Congregation of Quebec.³

A religious profession always brings a note of joy, but the first profession in this new land had about it an indescribable aura of hope and of fulfillment. If there was a shadow, it was because Madame de la Peltrie had left the small novitiate to resume her place in the world. The Ursuline annalist kindly notes that her decision was based on her poor health; later commentators suggest that an unsuitable temperament also contributed to the decision. Her flare for the bizarre and capricious made of her at best a dubious subject for religious life. Her contribution to the Canadian Mission was to be not in terms of the dedication of religious vows but in that very humble dedication of generous services which stands always just a little beyond the limits of the cloister, and a little, too, beyond its joys. Despite her gaiety and exuberance she was often a lonely figure as she walked beyond the lighted doorway of the monastery to the small house she had built for herself just a few yards away. And now, at this profession that might have been hers, she found herself once again a spectator.

As for Charlotte Barré, she had in the nine years she had spent in the New World more than proved her readiness for religious life. Only nineteen when under the direction of Father Salin she had sailed from Dieppe with Madame de la Peltrie, she was to continue her life of dedication until 1701, long, long after the founding Mothers had gone to their reward. She lived on past her Golden Jubilee to be a kind of legend who remembered the past better than the present, a wonderful source for the stories of the first sailing, the first monastery, the first profession.

Catherine Lézeau also had her claim to fame as the first lay Sister to make profession in the New World. She had for some time given the nuns anxiety because of her poor health; but Madame de la Peltrie loved her dearly and felt that, since her virtues were far more numerous than her infirmities, she should be accepted. With this in mind she offered to defray some of the expenses involved, and thus Catherine was enabled to make her profession.⁴

As Marie looked upon the newly professed, she felt almost palpably the regular pulsation of life beginning and life withdrawing. Her thoughts were never far from Mother St. Joseph

these days as she watched life ebbing away and knew herself powerless to stop it. For four months the young religious had been confined to the infirmary despite her protests; and yet Marie could have no illusions that this prolonged rest was doing any more than arresting a malady that, without a miracle, would prove fatal. To Mother St. Catherine at Tours she wrote, "Unless God performs a miracle she cannot live long. . . . My feeling is that she is a fruit ripe for picking and that God is disposing her for death, for she is making extraordinary progress in the way of perfection." She dreaded the long winter months when it was impossible to keep the convent cells sufficiently heated and when she could hear night after night through the partitions the unabated coughing of Mother St. Joseph. Pioneer life could supply few luxuries even for the sick, and Marie suffered the anguish of being able to provide none of the alleviations which France would have been able to offer. And yet when a letter arrived from Madame de la Troche, the invalid's mother, begging that Mother St. Joseph be sent home where adequate medical care would be given her, Marie experienced a decisive moment of vision which made her incontrovertibly sure that God, who had brought her to Canada despite so much family opposition, wished Mother St. Joseph to remain there until the end. When in October of 1648, Marie wrote to the invalid's sister, Mother Gabrielle de l'Annonciation, a Benedictine of Calvaire, she rejected for both the present and the future the plan to bring Mother St. Joseph back to France. Such a plan she knew well would be a far heavier cross for the young nun to bear than all the inconveniences she would have to suffer in Canada. It was not an easy letter for her to write, for she had too much of a mother's heart not to be able to understand the anxiety endured by Madame de la Troche. She could only promise that she herself would nurse the invalid, who would be treated as lovingly as her own mother would treat her; she would not retract her decision that Mother St. Joseph would never return to France:

As to your dear sister's sickness, it has lasted much longer this year than in previous years. She has had to spend four whole months in the infirmary, which has overwhelmed her

completely. The cause of her suffering is a chest complaint accompanied by asthma and complicated by a long infection which attacks her from time to time. I have informed your mother of the diagnosis that has been made here concerning her illness; but as to the desire she has expressed to have her daughter return to France, this would be impossible because of the sea voyage. Even if this could be done, however, neither she nor our community would ever consent to it. Even if I were the only one, I would still continue to oppose such a plan; for although I would like to give every possible happiness to your mother, nevertheless, I think she is too much a woman of piety not to want the complete sacrifice of the child who is so dear to her. Indeed, this child is neither a burden nor useless to this little school, despite what she thinks; rather, she is very useful through her virtue and her example. Over and above this, she has periods of good health during which she keeps the rule and performs her duties admirably. For my part, I am strongly resolved to serve her in every way possible. Since it was God who united us in the very beginning, I hope that nothing will separate us but death itself, so that our union will be perfected in eternity.

The shadow of death fell on the little community from another quarter as well when they learned of the massacre of Antoine Daniel and the Hurons with whom he was living. Father Daniel, one of the earliest of the Jesuit missionaries, had been working with the Hurons for over fourteen years. During the summer of 1648, he was stationed at the Mission of St. Joseph, one of the most difficult posts in the region. The traitorous killing of Father Jogues had terminated the peace with the Iroquois, and French and Hurons were again feeling the pressure of enemy attacks. But on the morning of July 4, no rumor of danger had reached St. Joseph. Late in June Father Daniel had made the journey to St. Marie, the central mission house in Huronia, to make his annual retreat among his fellow Jesuits. On the morning of July 2, he started on his homeward trek despite the invitation to stay on for a few days of rest and relaxation. Two days later, a few minutes after he had finished saying Mass, the stockade at St. Joseph was filled with demonic screams. The Iroquois war cry rang shrilly above the cries of the victims; and Father Daniel, still clothed in alb and stole, dashed from the church to help

his people. A few of the Hurons were able to flee to St. Marie, but the majority were trapped in their village. Running from cabin to cabin, Father Antoine, as his people called him, did his best to baptize and give absolution. Breathlessly he returned to the church to comfort the old and sick who had taken shelter there. Escape was impossible; and hearing the Iroquois drawing nearer, he stepped before them with that courage and control which his fellow Jesuits had so often remarked. For a moment the wild cries stopped and the bloody tomahawks were lowered. The figure before them frightened them in his white garment with the crimson stole flying about it. But their delay was only momentary. Superstition gave way to hatred, and within seconds the priest was caught and pierced by both arrows and rifle fire. His mutilated body was thrown into the church where many of the Hurons had gathered, and the building, filled with both the living and the dead, was then set on fire. Nothing of his body was ever recovered; he was, along with the people he had served unto the end, reduced to ashes.

Less than three weeks after Antoine Daniel's death, Father Bressani arrived in Quebec one morning just as Mass was starting, with the news that the Iroquois had encountered another group of Hurons and had killed over thirty of them. The pattern that the settlers had come to know and fear was beginning over again and this time with less hope of a trustworthy peace. It all meant, of course, an increase of Hurons in Quebec, more mouths to feed, more bodies to clothe. The situation was made more difficult by the fact that, for the Ursulines at least, 1648 brought less help from the mother country than ever before. It was not lack of interest but simply that France was having its own troubles and the nuns were unable to send as large an alms as they had in former years. The annalist continued to note with grateful care the supplies which arrived: five large woolen blankets, thirteen shirts, four pairs of shoes, four pairs of slippers, a cask of flour, a barrel of lard.⁵ But grateful as they were, the nuns looked at each other with amusement and consternation. What, indeed, were these among so many?

As the Huron fugitives continued to pour into Quebec, the unrest grew; and when in August the settlers learned that their Governor, De Montmagny, was being recalled to France, uneasi-

ness became the dominant note. For twelve years following the death of Champlain, De Montmagny had done his best to protect his colony from aggression, build up its agricultural resources, spread the faith of the mother country. The colonists were shocked by the sudden change, for they had assumed that De Montmagny would continue on in his post until sickness or old age demanded his return to France. The reason for his recall is difficult to assess. Perhaps it was, as some historians say, the initial effort in setting a definite term for the office of Governor. Even more likely, however, is the possibility that De Montmagny's removal had been instigated by the Company of Montreal, who had never found him a particular amenable administrator. Friction between Quebec and Montreal had existed from the beginning, and the newer post would find it a particular advantage to have a man at Quebec friendly to their own interests.

Louis d'Ailleboust de Coulonge was indeed such a man. For several years he had been De Maisonneuve's right-hand man in the government of Montreal; and when the latter left for a visit to France, it was D'Ailleboust who took over the government of the colony. It was he who had completed the fortifications and done much in other respects to insure the safety of the colonists. A later historian would write of him: "He knew the country, he loved it, and he lacked none of those qualities which, in ordinary times, would have made him a good Governor."⁶ The tragedy for D'Ailleboust was that 1648 was far from an ordinary year. Quebec waited in vain for help from France, while the Iroquois were emboldened by their victories. With neither ammunition nor military personnel at his command, the new Governor struggled on until 1650 when, after two years of anxiety and failure, he was replaced by Jean de Lauzon. Unlike De Montmagny, however, he did not return to France, but to Montreal, where his heart had always been.

The year 1648 brought its joys as well as its crosses, for during the summer Marie received long-awaited news from Claude. For the last five years he had been following his courses in philosophy and theology in the famous old Norman abbey of Jumièges in Normandy. Since he had been professed for more than six years, Marie had begun to grow anxious about his ordination;

the year before she had written hesitantly, "I dare not ask you again if God has honored you with Holy Orders." Now at last, her dearest hope was to be fulfilled, and with joy and gratitude she wrote to Claude:

It was with complete joy that I received your letter through which I learned that the Divine Goodness has begun your initiation into those holy orders by which you will serve Him most gratefully. I am so thankful for the hope you give me that one day you will be so blessed as to be admitted to the most sacrosanct of all the orders. Let us bless this sweet and loving Providence who by His secret way, even from the moment of our conception, has chosen us for His service. . . .

Yet even now that she was so assured of his happiness and her own, an old shadow sometimes crept across this relationship of mother and child: neither of them apparently could forget those dark and bitter years in which Claude cried for his mother—and cried in vain. Again and again in her letters she reverted to this subject, explaining, justifying, asking his pardon:

Actually, you do have some cause of complaint about me for having left you as I did. And I in my turn will complain quite freely, if He will permit me to do so, of Him who has come to bring a sword upon the earth, thus making such unnatural separations. Still it is true that you were the only thing in the world that my heart was attached to; yet He wished, nevertheless, to separate us while you were still a child. In order to keep my hold on you, I struggled for twelve years. . . . Finally, I had to yield to the force of divine love and to suffer this stroke of division which was inexpressibly painful to me, although this has not hindered the fact that I have been frequently considered the cruelest of mothers. My dearest Son, I ask your pardon, for I am indeed the cause why you have suffered so much sorrow. Let us console ourselves with the thought that life is very short and that we will have, through the mercy of Him who has separated us in this world, an eternity to see and enjoy each other in Him.

Another subject frequently arose in their correspondence: Claude's avid and persistent desire to know the full gamut of his mother's spiritual life. Again and again he returned to the attack, asking for a written account of all the graces God had

bestowed on her. Particularly after her severe illness, motivated perhaps by the thought that he might lose this extraordinary mother without ever learning the divine secrets which he felt sure she was concealing, he redoubled his requests. He was partially rewarded for his persistence, for in 1646 he received from Mother St. Joseph a sheaf of papers which Marie, thinking she was dying, gave her with instructions to burn them. But Mother St. Joseph, even more convinced than Claude of the unusual quality of Marie's spiritual life, had sent them on to her son, apparently without advising Marie of her actions. It is perhaps at this juncture that Claude began to conceive a full-scale biography of his mother. Toward this end, he felt that he must avail himself of every possible scrap of information, and once again he begged his mother to take the time to write out for him a spiritual biography. Marie, already working far into the night to keep abreast of essential correspondence, was weary of her son's importunity; yet love won in the end, and she promised him that at least at her death she would see that some of her notes were sent on to him, adding characteristically, "Actually, it seems to me that I owe this to a son who is consecrated to the service of my Divine Master."

Claude, leading the quiet and unhurried existence of a student at Jumièges, seemed never to comprehend fully the physical sacrifices that his mother made in writing the detailed letters which reached him with every boat. Perhaps Marie never meant him to realize the full cost of those letters which he came to take for granted; it is not to Claude but rather to her Ursuline Sisters in France that she makes such comments as, "I am writing to you at night, closed up in my room as in a coffin because of the cold." To Claude she spoke not so much of the difficulties of writing what he wanted but of the danger that her secrets, thus confided to paper, might find their way into alien hands. Even so, she does what she can to appease his curiosity, describing at length her present spiritual state, the vow which she had taken several years before to practice certain maxims of the Gospel, the conditions and signs of solid virtue.

This preoccupation with what Marie considers the undeniable hallmarks of true spirituality appeared with increasing frequency during the correspondence of 1648 and 1649. It is not only

with Claude that she discusses them; but others, too, seeking her advice concerning their prayer, found that she frequently turned the subject from the matter of prayer itself to the less visionary aspect of the practical virtues emanating from prayer. To an unnamed friend she wrote in answer to a letter concerned with states of prayer:

It [her prayer] is good insofar as the speculative and effective elements of prayer are concerned; but it will be no more than a nebulous and imaginative devotion if it does not terminate in the actual practice of those virtues which you have seen and experienced during your prayer. You must realize, my dear daughter, that you have a very big job to do and that consequently you have no time to lose, for it is a matter of imitating Jesus and Jesus crucified.

More and more, the value of suffering, the necessity of the cross, became the subject of her advice. To this same old friend who wrote of the consolations she received in her prayer, Marie addressed a note of caution. She remembered so well those ecstatic joys with which Our Lord had once overwhelmed her, but she remembered also that for them she had paid a great price. Consolations were sweet indeed, but they were not what mattered; what mattered was that one be faithful, clinging blindly to that faith, hope, and love even in darkness. Thus she wrote:

You are still in the infancy, or perhaps the adolescence, of your spiritual life, during which God nourishes you with consolations and sensible delights. The time of your probation will come, however; I mean the time for proving your fidelity to Him who has been so merciful to you. Be faithful, my dear child, and confirm your confidence in Him who will never abandon you unless you abandon Him first.

It was, however, to Mother Gillette Roland of the Visitation convent at Tours that she wrote the clearest account of her own spiritual dispositions and of her spiritual assessment of mission life. She knew now experientially the truth of the Gospel prophecy that the Saviour of the world was a sign who would be contradicted. For ten years she had watched the ebb and flow of this infant Church to which she had dedicated her life. She had watched its bulwarks crumble and its leaders die, and yet some-

how it had survived and gained strength from its own failure. It was not indeed men who ruled this Church but God himself, whose ways and thoughts were far from the ways and thoughts of His creatures. It is in this tone that she attempts to evaluate mission life for Mother Gillette:

In this country and in the atmosphere of this new Church, a spirit of obscurity rules everything. Everything that happens to us is like a secret hidden in His Divine Providence who takes His pleasures in blinding everyone as He wills. I have seen and consulted with a number of people who have all said to me, "I am groping blindly in all of my affairs, and despite my blindness they all come out right without my being able to say how." This can be applied to the state of the country in general as well as to that of individual families. It is the same in the spiritual order. I have observed that those who seemed to be advanced in perfection when they were in France, seem now very imperfect both in their own eyes and in everybody else's; this is a real trial for them. The more they try, the more they discover fresh faults in themselves. The reason for all this is that the new Church has such a great purity that imperfection, no matter how small, is incompatible with it. Consequently, one must permit this work of purification to take place by constantly dying to oneself. . . . This secret spirit which is none other than the spirit of Jesus Christ and His Gospel gives to the purified soul a certain participation in itself which establishes it in an interior life which resembles His own. If you ask me what this life is like, I cannot answer, except to say that the soul neither loves nor relishes anything except the imitation of Jesus Christ in His interior life. . . .

She could hardly know how prophetically she spoke, because before another year was out the Canadian Mission was to rock before a storm of persecution the enormity of which was still mercifully hidden from those who would bear its brunt.

By mid-November Quebec was covered by its first snow, and by Christmas the drifts were piled high through the streets of the settlement. Under the direction of Father Lalemant, the Christmas ceremonies were on a grander scale than ever. This year Midnight Mass was preceded by the singing of Matins in the parish church. A large crowd arrived for this novel event which began at ten and continued until a quarter to twelve. This left,

Father Lalemant observed happily, just enough time for a little instruction to be given before the Midnight Mass. The elevation of the Mass took on a heightened ceremony by having it accompanied by background violin music. "Everything went very well," Lalemant wrote with a certain justifiable smugness. One wonders if his parishioners agreed, since he also noted that he had decided that it was not necessary to have a fire in the church during the ceremonies.⁷

New Year's Day would have passed with the usual joyful festivities had it not been for a bouquet of dried flowers which were delivered at the Ursulines' door during the afternoon with the compliments of Father Lalemant in the name of the Jesuit Fathers. In consternation the religious realized that not a single greeting or gift had made its way to the Jesuit house. Ransacking their small store of treasures, they could find nothing suitable until one of the nuns discovered a rosary with a crucifix designed as a reliquary. The gift was suitably wrapped and a workman sent off posthaste with the belated offering. The fact that it was an afterthought did not escape the watchful eyes of Father Lalemant, who wrote in his diary under date of January 1:

This morning the Governor sent us by his butler two bottles of Spanish wine, a turkeycock, and an Agnus Dei. He sent the same to Father Vimont, and some Spanish wine to Father Le Jeune. The Hospital nuns sent us a bottle of Spanish wine and two capons. We received nothing from the Ursulines; but having sent a few bouquets of [dried] flowers to them as well as to the Hospital, they sent us that evening a rosary with a medal and reliquary.⁸

Toward the close of Lent, two joyous ceremonies took place in the Ursuline chapel. One was the solemn first Communion of their pupils on Holy Thursday, at which Father Lalemant officiated. The other was the clothing of Philippe-Gertrude de Boulogne, sister of the new Governor's wife, who had taken the name of St. Dominique. The new novice was from a wealthy French family and had come to Canada with her sister Barbe and her brother-in-law in 1643. During the five years they had lived in Montreal, she was an invaluable assistant of Jeanne Mance and noteworthy throughout the colony for her devotion

and self-sacrifice. When she first began to think of religious life is not evident, but it is certain that she met with concerted opposition. Although Governor d'Ailleboust was a man of remarkable piety, he, nevertheless, felt that the rigors of a Canadian cloister were far more than his young sister-in-law could sustain. Recognizing her determination, however, he had withdrawn his opposition; and she had entered the Ursuline monastery on December 2, 1648.⁹

Such joys as these the religious treasured dearly in a world where death and the fear of death moved in on them from all sides. The Iroquois had taken the death of Father Jogues as the signal for a fresh reign of terror. Within days after his body had been thrown into the Mohawk River, two bands of Iroquois made for the territory near Montreal. The settlers, unaware that the peace treaty had been broken, kept only a casual defense against attack. With De Maisonneuve away in France, Montreal could easily have sustained a mortal blow, but this time the Iroquois seemed bent on wreaking their vengeance not so much against the French as against the Hurons. Large numbers of these were killed or captured and brought to the Iroquois villages for a full-scale massacre. Day by day, gaunt and weary fugitives slipped into Quebec with their tales of pillage and torture: several Christian chiefs had been killed on the spot; a young Christian who had led the Hurons in prayer had, in retaliation, been burned alive for two long days while the other captives were forced to watch his agonies; a three-year-old child, recently baptized, had been crucified to a tree, with sharpened stakes holding its little body in place. And through it all the head of Isaac Jogues looked down upon them all from the high stake on which it had been fixed weeks before.

Huronian, that land which had promised so much for the Christian faith, seemed doomed to extinction. What the Jesuits saw before them now was a far cry from the note of hope which Father Lalemant, then superior of the Huron Mission, had sounded in his letter to his superior ten years before: "I do not know . . . what God intends to do, nor in what way; but we are full of hope that with patience and courage, He to whom nothing is impossible and who from nothing produces whatever He wills, will do more than we would dare to say."¹⁰

But the ten years which they thought would be so fruitful had brought plague and death and failure. The Hurons, by far the most receptive of the Indian nations, were dwindling in numbers and influence. Their fighting instincts were atrophied by a sense of doom and their one thought was to save themselves by flight from the terror of fire and tomahawk. In the Mission of St. Marie alone, the Fathers recorded that eight thousand Huron fugitives had passed through their hands by 1648. And as the Huron villages lay abandoned or fallen before the Iroquois onslaught, St. Marie, originally situated in the center of the Huron nation, now found itself a dangerous outpost. Yet even after the death of Antoine Daniel and the destruction of the Mission of St. Joseph, the mission personnel at St. Marie continued to be hopeful of the spiritual fruits they might still reap. Fear of the Iroquois had conquered whatever opposition the Hurons had originally felt for the Black Robes; now they looked upon them as a source of strength and protection, and the Fathers did their best to justify this trust. Both priests and *donnés* continued work on the fortifications while Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant, nephew of Jerome, exhorted the Hurons to complete work on the palisades at St. Ignace, a few miles away.

In 1649, the mission personnel at St. Marie consisted of twenty-two priests. Fathers de Brébeuf and Lalemant made this their headquarters as they continued their weekly rounds of the villages under their care. On Monday, March 15, these two, so alike in spirit, so different in appearance, set out as usual for the village of St. Louis only three miles away. As always, Brébeuf was in the lead, his great height and corpulent form dwarfing the thin, undersized little Jesuit who trotted after him. But Gabriel Lalemant had already proved himself a giant in his own right. For sixteen years he had repeated annually his request to be sent on the Canadian Mission. Each year he had been refused, but each year he petitioned again. In the end his importunity conquered all obstacles, and at the age of thirty-six he arrived in Quebec from whence, after two years of preparation, he was sent by his uncle to the Mission of the Hurons. His delight at finding himself the companion of that famous missionary, Jean de Brébeuf, was unparalleled. De Brébeuf, at first

apprehensive of the delicate constitution of the new recruit, soon recognized that his strength of spirit far outweighed the frailty of his flesh. Gabriel Lalemant had a gift for languages as well; and now, only seven months after his arrival in Huronia, he was a competent master of the Huron tongue. Less than a month before, Father Ragueneau, his superior, had written with pleasure, "He has made so much progress in the language in so short a time that there is no doubt that God wishes to use him in this mission."¹¹

But Lalemant's usefulness was to be short-lived, for less than twenty-four hours after they had set out from St. Marie, both he and De Brébeuf were captives of the Iroquois. With their usual stealth, the Iroquois had surrounded St. Louis, which was soon a carnage of blood and fire. In the few minutes of warning they had, the two priests managed to get most of the women and children out of the village and on the trail for St. Marie. The hundred warriors who remained, under the leadership of the Christian chief, Stephen Annaotaha, made a brief but courageous defense against the hundreds of Iroquois who piled through the broken stockades. Maddened by hate and the lust for blood, they threw their tomahawks and arrows recklessly; but when they came upon the two Black Robes, the Iroquois screamed with delight: no sudden death for these two, something far more elaborate was in store for them. With their hands savagely pinioned behind them, the two priests joined the bloody lines of Huron prisoners to be marched over the familiar trail leading to St. Ignace.

There in the village which he had helped to build, not far from the spot which he had planned for his chapel, Jean de Brébeuf's trial by torture began. It was high noon when they began to mutilate his hands; it was almost sunset when his unrecognizable body was thrown into the fire. During those four hours he had been permitted not a moment of respite. From head to foot, his body had been torn and gashed and burned. Spitting out the burning coals which they had forced into his mouth, still he had continued to pray—prayers for strength but prayers also of mercy for his persecutors. Even when he was devoid of eyes and lips and tongue, the guttural sounds of his prayer still rose above the screams of his tormentors. Nothing could stop this charred and naked giant from crying to heaven

with his last breath, "Jesus have mercy on us!" As his lifeless body sank among the flames, it bore a flaming fulfillment of that vow which he had been inspired to make ten years before:

I vow never to lose the chance of martyrdom, if You, in Your mercy, oh my God, will offer it to Your unworthy servant. . . . If any occasion to die for You presents itself, I will not avoid it; and when the blow of death will be given, I will accept it with a joyful and triumphant heart.¹²

His warrior family, whose reckless exploits could be traced as far back as William the Conqueror, would have been proud of him. He had fought a long battle and a hard one, far harder than many of his companions realized. Mission life had not always come easily to him; he had had his months of revulsion, of loneliness, of discouragement. But he had found an answer to his difficulties, a simple answer but one that never deserted him. He had written once to his provincial in France: "Jesus Christ is the true grandeur of a missionary; it is He alone and His cross that we must seek."¹³

It was over for Father de Brébeuf, and that Jesus whom he had sought so faithfully was His at last. During those long four hours, Gabriel Lalemant, huddled naked among the Huron prisoners, looked on while the friend and Father who had taught him so much in the few short months they had spent together triumphed over every cruelty which the savages could invent. He had heard of how Iroquois prisoners died; he had listened to the tales of atrocities which escaped Hurons brought to them. He had, he recalled, even prayed that he might someday die a martyr. And now that grace was his. There was a strange calm in his heart as he was hauled to his feet and fixed to the torture stake—a peace and a kind of fearlessness that God who had fashioned his frail body would Himself be his strength. The sun had just begun to set when his captors began their work. The hours of the night dragged on, and still the savages had not done. His life now was a strange alternation between the darkness of unconsciousness and the blinding light of pain. Nothing else existed. The sun rose and still he lived. It was not until fifteen hours after his torments had begun that the small, thin body of the man who had dreamed all his life of someday being

a missionary among the Indians was pitched into the dying fire.

News had already reached St. Marie of the destruction of St. Louis and St. Ignace. Stephen Annaotaha had managed to escape during the orgies which followed the priests' death and brought to the shocked and sorrowing Jesuits an eyewitness account of their martyrdom. As soon as the Iroquois had again taken to the trail, Jacques Bonin, a long-standing friend of Father Lalemant, accompanied by two *donnés*, was sent to St. Ignace to recover the bodies. The spot was not hard to find; and when they reached it, they found that there had been no hyperbole in the barbaric descriptions they had been given. Father Bonin, helpless with grief, knelt before the charred body of the man who had been his friend and his ideal; and for two hours tears of horror and desolation bore witness to his own compassionate suffering.

In silent awe the little group brought back what remained to the priests' cabin at St. Marie. The martyrs' bodies, attended to as well as possible, were laid on bark mats; and despite the poverty of the mission, the two best sets of priestly vestments were brought to cover with the dignity of their sacerdotal office the remains of those who knew in very deed what it was to consecrate both body and blood.¹⁴

It was with a mixture of sorrow and pride that Jerome Lalemant brought the news to the Ursulines that his nephew Gabriel and Jean de Brébeuf had suffered martyrdom. Of Father de Brébeuf, whom they had come to know so well during the years he had been forced to spend at Quebec, the monastery annalist noted succinctly: "He was the personification of greatness and courage."

A year earlier, after the death of Antoine Daniel and the destruction of the Mission of St. Joseph, there had been a period of panic when even the settlers behind the fortified walls of Quebec had feared for their lives. Yet no great action was taken, and the general attitude seemed to be that even the ferocity of the Iroquois would spend itself in vain against the strong fortifications of the rock-built city. Marie seemed to voice the common opinion when she wrote to Mother St. Catherine at Tours:

I don't know why you are so afraid of the Iroquois for us. If they get this far, the whole country will be lost. . . . What will it all matter, provided we keep a complete trust in our

Jesus? Otherwise our hearts would be always in despair. We have our holy martyr in heaven who prays for us and we feel the effects of his prayers in escaping from many perils. . . . For myself, I will tell you quite frankly, I am afraid of nothing, and even though I realize that I am the most miserable creature in the world, I feel myself ready to go to the extremities of the earth—any place where there are savages—if they wanted to send me there. And yet I am not worthy of such great things.

Now, however, this attitude of assurance was fast disappearing. With the deaths of two more Jesuits and the destruction of St. Louis and St. Ignace, the Huron opposition to the Iroquois was broken. At St. Marie, Paul Ragueneau and the men under him did what they could, but it was impossible to stem the tide of hysterical fugitives who poured through the mission into the forest beyond. St. Marie, Father Ragueneau realized, must be closed. On the advice of a few remaining Huron chiefs, he decided to move northeast and build a second St. Marie on the island of Ahoendoe about twenty miles distant. By mid-June their old home was dismantled, their possessions packed on an awkward homemade barge, and the village of St. Marie set aflame behind them.

But this last desperate effort to provide a rallying point for the remnant of the Huron tribe was doomed to failure; the second St. Marie was to become a byword for the horrors of famine and disease, which brought in their wake as cruel and lingering a death as the fire of the Iroquois. Soon their small stock of grain expired, and both Indians and white men were reduced to a diet of boiled acorns and an occasional fish. As the winter darkened about them, the Jesuits could no longer close their eyes to the fact that the savages had begun to live on the bodies of their dead. "Famished teeth no longer discerned the nature of what they ate," Father Ragueneau wrote in an effort to excuse what he could no longer control.¹⁵ On the mainland the Iroquois continued to prowl, making a prison of what the Hurons had chosen as a refuge.

By spring more than half the Hurons were dead; the remainder were disease-ridden skeletons without strength to help themselves. Ragueneau again took council with the chiefs, and together they agreed that the only hope for survival lay in the thousand-mile

trip to Quebec. Slowly, laboriously they gathered their strength to begin work on the dozens of canoes necessary to transport the remaining Hurons eastward down the St. Lawrence. At the beginning of June, three to four hundred savages, accompanied by the Jesuits, set out upon their hazardous journey. On July 28, the remnant of the Huron nation reached Quebec.

Although throughout the winter Huron fugitives had reached Quebec with tales of the pitiful conditions to which their brothers were reduced, the settlers could hardly credit the sight that met their eyes as Father Ragueneau directed his flock disembarking at the wharves. All the religious—Religious of the Hôtel Dieu, Ursulines, Jesuits—were pressed into service to care and house the miserable, filthy wretches that crawled from the canoes. There was no need to relate the horrors under which they had lived; their emaciated bodies told the tale well. The *Jesuit Relation* testified briefly: "It was necessary to furnish them with kettles and hatchets, and even to provide clothing for the greater number of the families; and we have had to continue this expenditure for a great many poor, sick and disabled persons. In short, we are their fathers, their mothers, and their all."¹⁸

In anguish Marie wrote to Claude: ". . . the Church is terribly persecuted, the towns and villages are sacked, the churches and altars overturned, and the best of our Christians put to death." Her grief was almost insupportable as she watched the destruction of everything that was most dear to her. It was not her personal safety that mattered; it was not even the sufferings of those priests who had given their lives for the cause of Christ. The caliber of her faith was too strong not to rise above the thoughts of their physical torments to see the glory of their victory; what was intolerable was the damage done to the Kingdom of Christ—that hatred should triumph over His love—this was more than she could bear. She could find no solace, except in service to those destitute members of the infant Church which she loved so dearly. Four years later, writing an account of her spiritual life for Father Lalemant, she recalled vividly the thoughts of her heart during those desolate months:

In that year I suffered extremely because of the persecution that the Iroquois vented against the Church. When I entered into the interests of my Divine Spouse, I was interiorly cruci-

fied by the harm which was being done to this Church, even though my soul remained completely submissive to whatever He ordained or permitted. It was during this time that Fathers de Brébeuf, Garnier, and Lalemant were burned and massacred with all their flock, and that all the Fathers of the Huron Mission, with the remnant of their poor Christians, were forced to leave their home and seek refuge here. How I suffered from all this! It was the most pathetic thing that had yet happened in this new Church. The Fathers who were still living suffered more than those who were dead. They were men who had been made perfect and in whom the Spirit of Jesus Christ lived more than they lived in themselves. Their holiness was so visible that everyone was struck by it.

Thus they and their flock, numbering four to five hundred Christians, stopped here at Quebec. In my soul's affliction at the sight of these poor fugitives, I had but a single consolation: that I would be near them and be able to take their children with us. Our Lord inspired me to study their Huron language, in which I had had no practice, for from the beginning I had left this to Mother St. Joseph in order to give myself to Algonquin and Montagnais, since these were the two languages with which we had had the most to do. I learned it [Huron] that I might also teach our prayers and catechism to a full cabin of women and young girls, which Mother St. Joseph and I took turns with on alternate weeks.

In addition to this, we have had a very big family to take care of; for although many devoted people do what they can to help those poor exiles, it is the houses of religious and Madame de la Peltrie who contribute the most. The Fathers alone feed and teach three to four hundred. Their great love makes them take every possible means to keep those from perishing who had already cost them so much in terms of sweat and labor in order that Jesus Christ might be born in them and that they might be delivered from the fire and rage of their enemies. In my office of procurator, it is I who distribute each week the living expenses to those who are in our care; it is a wonderful consolation to me to render this small service.

In the midst of all her sorrow, she had one strong consolation: Mother St. Joseph was up and about again. For some time now she had been able to continue her teaching and had resumed her care of the little boarders. It was with real joy that Marie was able to write to Mother Gabrielle de l'Annonciation, de-

scribing the improved health of her sister. All the letters written during the fall of 1649 have about them an aura of warmth and tenderness; perhaps she felt that they might well be her last letters, for that year death seemed very close. It was, of course, for Claude that she sacrificed her sleep and the little strength that remained to her at the end of a long day to satisfy the catalogue of questions which he never grew tired of asking: "I will be up all night answering your questions," she wrote in late October as a prelude to a letter of almost six thousand words. And then, thinking that this might sound like a complaint, she added quickly, "and yet how much I want to do this for you." The letter that followed was a detailed and often obscure description of spiritual states and interior problems which were apparently answers to the questions which he had asked her. At the end, tired and uncertain that she had satisfied his queries, she concluded:

It seems to me that what I have just said should answer your questions sufficiently, even though I have written very hastily and organized everything very poorly. You must supply for my defects, for I am a poor wretch harassed with business affairs not only for our own house but for France as well. . . . Thus I have a thousand cares and a thousand things to do; but there is no point in telling you all about this except that every minute is filled with some occupation so that I can never answer you with the leisure that I would like so much. However, don't let this hinder you from writing to me as usual; but send your letters early so that I can take my time in answering them properly.

Yet the next day, with an eagerness which only maternal love could supply, she again took pen in hand to dash off a short note to this most beloved of sons. She is brimming over with the wonderful news that a dear and trusted Canadian friend has just been to see her to tell her that he is going to France for a visit. And she, usually so reticent in asking favors of others, hardly hears him out before she asks if he will take the time to go to see her son.

And then, thinking perhaps that she may never have another chance for so direct a contact, the religious in her retreated before the mother, and she lifted the veil which ordinarily covered her

face when talking with externs. "I raised my veil before him," she wrote to Claude, "so that he could tell you that he had not only spoken with me but also seen me." She folded the letter and sealed it, wondering if it might be the last one she would ever write to him.

CHAPTER 16

Long before the canoes from Ile St. Joseph arrived with their wretched burdens, Quebec had recognized the danger of its own position. With their Huron allies close to extinction, there was little to protect them from full Iroquois assault. Although the winter of 1650 had been fairly quiet, spring brought increasing tales of atrocities from the outlying posts. Rumor soon spread wildly through the colony that the Iroquois' successes had so emboldened them that a large force was even then making for Quebec. Panic seized the town as the inhabitants realized how meager their resources were against the increasing numbers of their enemies. Marie, usually so optimistic and encouraging, wrote with desperate realism: "It is only from France that help can come to us, because this whole country put together does not have enough strength to resist them."

Yet through it all the daily round of ordinary living continued. With their rugged will to survive, the colonists set themselves to planting and harvesting, to drying fish and preserving what they could of fruits and vegetables against the barren winter months. Even though their sleep was uneasy with dreams of the whirl of arrows and the screech of war cries, their days were filled with those ordinary occupations which are the strongest bulwarks against terror and despair. The religious were busier than ever with hundreds of extra mouths to feed and bodies to clothe. Several hundred sick and idle Indians could easily turn into a demoralizing force in the small city, and the Jesuits did their best to organize them into useful occupations. Although the burden of additional instruction fell on all the religious, the Ursulines received the bulk of it. Mother St. Joseph was beside herself with joy at the opportunity to use the Huron tongue over which she had struggled so manfully. Marie, rather amused at her own audacity, set out to

study Huron despite her age and lack of facility for the mastering of languages. If Algonquin had made her head ache ten years before, Huron, she found, was worse. Still she kept at it through the winter months under the competent direction of Father Bresani. Writing to Claude of this latest venture, she explained:

Perhaps you will laugh at me for beginning to study a new language at the age of fifty; but it is necessary to undertake everything for the service of God and the salvation of our neighbor. I began my studies eight days after the octave of All Saints, having for my teacher Father Bressani, who acquits himself of his task with great charity.

Although Marie had often dreamed of martyrdom, it had never seemed so close as in the summer of 1650. Writing to Claude in late August, she discussed with simple candor the possibility of her death:

He [Father Ragueneau] has assured me from his own experience with the fury and force of the Iroquois that, unless we receive immediate help from France or unless it pleases God to rescue the country in some extraordinary way, everything is lost. This is no exaggeration, for I can tell you the same thing from my own small experience.

You see by this that while awaiting help we live in a state of pure Providence. For myself, my very dearest Son, I am so well and my heart is so content that I really could not be better. If news of my death should be brought to you this year, thank God for it and offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for me.

As always, however, it is the fate of the infant Church rather than her personal fate which is the subject of her deepest worry. In answer to Claude's suggestion that they attempt to train a native clergy so that even if the French were forced to leave, the savages would not be bereft of the faith, she voices grave doubts about the feasibility of such a move. This course had already suggested itself to them, and she herself had discussed it with some of the Jesuits; however, they feel as she does. Although the Indians are capable of a kind of spirituality, and even of leading very holy lives, once they have been properly instructed they do not have those natural gifts which are essential for ecclesiastical

positions. The good that they do will be in terms of indirect influence on their companions through an apostolate of example rather than as leaders and ministers of their tribes. She ends sadly with the thought that came to her often during those months of uncertainty, "Perhaps all that God wants here is a transitory church." She who for years had wanted to be despoiled of everything that she might have God alone now found that she must detach herself from the interest which touched her most deeply: the extension of the Kingdom of God. To watch the collapse of this Kingdom for which she had given her life and yet to continue to adore lovingly that Providence which had so ordained events—never before had she been asked a sacrifice comparable to this.

But despite the extremity in which they lived, there was no slacking in ecclesiastical ceremonies. Father Lalemant would never concede that danger of imminent death might be considered an adequate excuse for carelessness in Church rubrics. When in mid-June the usual procession took place for the feast of Corpus Christi, he found no justification for the straggling lines which proceeded from the Hôtel Dieu to the Ursulines. Despite rumor that the Iroquois were cautiously drawing closer to Quebec, he continued his meticulous notations in his *Journal*, noting on the evening following the procession: "The order was good but it was not well kept, for they were all walking on each other's heels; the cause of this difficulty was primarily the two Fathers who carried the incense. They walked much too quickly and didn't take the trouble to keep opposite each other."¹ He was apparently vocal in his recommendations, for when the feast of the Assumption arrived, the solemn procession was perfectly executed. In first place came a statue of Our Lady carried by two Jesuits on a lavishly decorated cart. Behind them marched a large portion of the settlers, followed by six hundred savages. Marie, watching it all from a window in the monastery, noted, "Never in France have I seen such order and such devotion."

If the infant Church in Canada was doomed to die, it was, at least, to die well. Within the city itself the Indians showed a docility and responsiveness which the missionaries were convinced was the work of grace; and from the outlying districts came rumors of the fidelity of the Christian Hurons to the faith they had so recently accepted. Even those captured by the Iroquois retained

their status as Christians although this increased the sufferings heaped upon them. Earlier that summer news had come that ten Algonquin Christians, formerly residents at the mission at Sillery, had been taken captive; and in August two escaped Hurons brought the sorrowful word that all of them had been burned alive. Marie's heart was heavy, for one of them, Joseph, had been her spiritual son, "who loved me as a real mother," she later wrote. He had been brought up by Father Le Jeune at Sillery and was just eleven when Marie met him for the first time. Through the years their mutual trust and understanding had grown, and in the strength of his manhood he had seemed destined to be a leader of his people. Sharing this latest sorrow with Claude, she wrote:

For three days and three nights he lived on among the most atrocious torments. Thus they derided his faith, which, however, he continued to confess even to his last breath. These barbarians mocked him saying, "Where is your God? He will not help you now." Then they began once more to torture him and to deride him saying, "Pray to your God and see if he will help you." But this brave servant of God only redoubled his prayers and his praise of Him for whom he suffered. The chanting of his voice, clear and strong, only served to enrage his captors. . . . In your opinion, has he not been a wonderful son to me? And now he is rather my Father and my advocate with God. I am thrilled when I think of the extraordinary grace he has received to persevere thus with such generosity. He was a handsome, perfectly proportioned young man and very modest—but it is his fidelity that I want to praise above all. If one should come to bring me such news of you, my dearest Son, what would not be my joy in receiving it!

And Claude, walking piously through the cloisters of Jumièges, secure and tranquil beneath the austerity of the flawless Romanesque arches, felt a new spiritual aspiration in his soul: he felt the desire for martyrdom. Proud to share his mother's aspirations, he confided his latest desire to her; but instead of the answer he expected, he received a counsel so homespun in its practicality that his dreams looked as flimsy as cobwebs in comparison. While Marie neither questioned nor contended the desire he expressed, she channeled it into its proper area: "This desire should be for you a powerful stimulus to lead a life which is penitent, mortified,

and very regular. This is the kind of martyrdom which you have to suffer and which God asks of you." When, Marie wondered, would Claude master that fundamental principle of the spiritual life—to stop climbing mountains that did not exist and recognize in the circumstances of the moment a clear manifestation of the divine will.

Meanwhile the Jesuits too were seeking a manifestation of the divine will. It was obvious even to the most chauvinistic among them that the Mission of the Hurons, as it had been originally conceived, was finished. They must find some solution for the few hundred savages whom they had brought from Ile St. Joseph; and even more basic, some decision must be taken concerning those missionaries who had been stationed with the Hurons. The Jesuit house at Quebec did not need another two dozen priests, nor could it, in the rigorous circumstances of 1650, hope to provide a living for them. The decision rested on Father Lalemant's shoulders. It would have been easier to send them off to martyrdom than to announce the news that a large group of Fathers must return to France at the end of the summer. The months of August and September were punctuated with farewells as groups of Jesuits, weary and vanquished by forces too strong for them to conquer, boarded the waiting ships. Although during their years in New France they had often had to struggle against nostalgia for the motherland, they now found an even deeper loneliness in leaving their adopted country. As the ships weighed anchor, their remaining Brothers waved to them from the wharves. But there were many gaps in the ranks: Father Raimbault, first Jesuit to die in New France; Anne de Nouë, martyr of charity, frozen to death in the snow; Ennemond Massé, that patriarch among missionaries; Isaac Jogues, gentle, sensitive, most lovable of them all perhaps; Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant, whose sufferings were already becoming legendary; Antoine Daniel, zealous and strong, annihilated to ashes; Charles Garnier and Noël Chabanel, whose fidelity had cost them their lives. Yet despite the blood that had been shed so valiantly, they had to admit that they had failed. The moment of departure was one of decisive faith, of trust stronger than death—the moment to penetrate deeper than ever before the naked truth of the Gospel maxim that the grain of wheat must die before there can be a harvest.

They had often prayed for the death of martyrdom until the thought had grown sweet to them; but God had chosen another kind of death for them—the death of failure—and its taste was like ashes.

Although Marie was saddened at the sight of these zealous missionaries having to leave their territory, she was overjoyed at the various offers to take messages to her son. Few if any of the Fathers escaped without a letter or little package addressed to the Reverend Father Claude Martin, Order of St. Benedict. It was, however, especially Fathers Lalemant and Bressani whom she counted on to give Claude a full account not only of mission affairs but of her own activities in particular.²

It was lonely without Father Lalemant, who had become in truth their Father during the four years he had been superior at Quebec. They missed him especially during the profession ceremony of Sister St. Dominique de Boulogne which took place on December 8, for it was the first profession at which he had not officiated.

In the monastery on the hill, Christmas was happy and busy as the nuns tried to fix a festive dinner for the Indians under their care. There were few delicacies in their larder; but they managed to scrape together enough lard and flour to fill the recipe for *sagamité*, the Indians' favorite dish. Christmastide was bitterly cold that year but clear and crisp, so that the snow was dazzlingly white beneath the winter sun. As the nuns left chapel and went to their cells on the evening of December 30, the sky was ablaze with stars and the moon was bright. They had been asleep for several hours when they were dragged into consciousness by a nightmare voice crying fire. No sooner were they out of their beds than they could feel the heightened temperature about them. Still half-drugged with sleep, they made their way along the narrow corridor to the stairs. From here the lurid light of the flames sprang at them, and they ran blindly on, doing what they could to lead their terrified boarders to safety. Marie, more easily aroused than some of her Sisters, thought immediately of the supplies kept in the closet on the next floor. She ran forward and up the stairs, but a single glance showed her she could not succeed. The flames were already devouring the staircase. Desperately she turned and ran back to the cells; here she found the account book of the

community, some important papers pertaining to business transactions, and several, small strongboxes. These she pitched through the window hoping that someone below would see them and keep them safe for her. Again she ran along the corridor, and at the stairs met a young Jesuit who had hoped to get upstairs to save some of the nuns' possessions. Too breathless to speak, she waved him down. Turning to see what else she could do in the precious moments left, she realized that she had already delayed too long. Two fires were converging on her from left and right and a third cut off her exit. With no alternative she stumbled through the passage into the parlor; here to her relief she found that the wooden grill had been broken and that she could crawl through the opening into the room beyond and finally out of the burning building.

She was the last to leave, and as she emerged from the flaming monastery, she saw grouped in the snow before her the homeless and destitute members of her community. About them huddled the little boarders, shaking with cold and fear and clinging desperately to the helpless nuns. Barefooted, some of them still clad only in their nightgowns, they stood deep in the snow, watching with dazed fascination while the flames raked their convent from end to end. In the glare of the fire it was bright as day, although the rest of the city was cast in darkness. Already the townspeople had gathered, doing what they could to alleviate the cold—giving a blanket, a robe, a warm shawl, and, even more, promises of help, words of consolation and encouragement. There was fortunately no wind, and, consequently, no danger that the fire might spread. Despite the cold, they waited on, knowing there was nothing they could do, yet not wanting to turn away until it was over. It did not take long for the fire to do its work, and soon the last great crash told them that "the most beautiful house in Canada" was no more. They turned then to the sympathetic circle which surrounded them, feeling for the first time the bite of the cold and the pain of their naked feet frozen fast to the snow. The Religious of the Hôtel Dieu had already sent word that they would be welcome at their convent, and there they were taken to spend the few remaining hours of the night.

Writing later to Claude, Marie explained, "On the 30th of December during the octave of the birth of Our Lord, He wanted

us to share in the suffering and poverty of his crib." Never had they shared so completely. Nothing had been saved from the fire except the Blessed Sacrament and a few of the sacred vessels from the sacristy. They had lost all their stores of provisions, their clothes, their books, their rosaries and breviaries. Everything was gone. Clothed in the gray habit of the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu, they shared their house, their food, their prayers. Father Ragueneau who, as acting superior, now kept the *Journal* for the Jesuits, noted all in only a few sentences: "On the 30th of December, about an hour or two after midnight, the Ursuline's bakery caught on fire and their whole house burned to the ground; it was with difficulty they were able to save themselves, half-dressed as they were. None of the furnishings were saved except in the sacristy. The loss is valued at about forty thousand francs."³

Some months later, Marie wrote a complete description of that night to Claude. The detailed account which she produced is sufficient indication of how deeply the events of those harrowing hours were engraved on her memory. She forgot nothing, and each detail is as vivid as on the night of its happening:

A Sister who was going to bake the next day had prepared her leaven and because of the intense cold had put some lighted coals into the bread trough to keep it warm. She meant to take these coals out before retiring, but since she was not accustomed to do this, it was easy for it to slip her mind. The trough was so tightly closed on all sides that a Sister who was in that part of the house about eight o'clock that evening saw no sign of the fire. But the coals having dried out the trough which was of oily pinewood, it caught fire, which soon spread to the partitions and paneling, then to the ceiling and the stairs which were directly under the boarding school where Mother des Seraphins was sleeping with the children. She was startled out of her sleep by the crackling of the fire, and leaping up she thought she heard someone saying to her, "Get up at once and save your children; they are going to be burned alive." Actually the fire had already penetrated through the floor and the flames had gained entrance into the room, making it as bright as day. Terrified, she cried to the children, "Save yourselves, save yourselves." From there she went up to the dormitory to awaken the community . . . who immediately leaped into action. One went to ring the bell to summon help,

while the others tried to extinguish the fire. I, instead of working with them, ran to tell them that they must abandon everything, for the fire could not be controlled. I wanted to go up to the place where I had put our materials and other provisions reserved for the community, but God made this thought give way to another: to try to save all the business papers of the community. I took whatever I could put my hands on and threw them out the window of my room.

I was left alone to carry out my first thought, for since the Sisters were escaping only half-clothed it seemed necessary to try to get them some covering. Thus I wanted to go up to our little storeroom, but I discovered that the fire had already reached our dormitory and not only where I wanted to go but along the whole roof of the house and through the offices downstairs. Thus I found myself caught between two fires with a third following me like a torrent. I was not so much inconvenienced by the flames but I was nearly choked by the smoke.

In order to save myself I had to pass beneath the bell, thus putting myself in danger of being buried under the melting iron. Our Mother Assistant, along with Sister St. Laurent, had broken through the grill, which was only of wood, in order to escape with a group of their children. But it was only the oldest ones who had been saved; the little ones were still in danger. Sister St. Ignace reflected for a moment whether she could in conscience risk her own life in a chance of saving these little ones, for the fire was already eating through the walls. Then she ran courageously into their room and got them out just as the floor gave way. At this time I was still in the dormitory; but seeing that there was nothing else I could do and realizing that I might well perish, I bowed before my crucifix, accepting whatever His Providence would ordain and abandoning myself to Him in everything. But I was able to save myself by going through the parlor, which was at one end of the dormitory. Going downstairs I met some of the helpers who had been sent by our Father Superior, but learning that there was nothing they could do up there, they went into the chapel, where they were just able to save the Blessed Sacrament and some ornaments which were in the sacristy. Our Reverend Mother, who had been the first one out in order to unlock the doors and who then had drawn back out of the way, suffered the terrors of death when she could not see any of us near her, fearing that we had been enveloped in

the flames. She called out to us pathetically, but neither seeing nor hearing us, she threw herself at the feet of the Blessed Virgin and made a vow in honor of her Immaculate Conception. I can't say absolutely what the effect of this vow was with God, but to me it seems like a real miracle that none of us nor of our children perished in this fire which was so quick and so violent. A Huron woman, a very good Christian, who did not awaken as quickly as the others, not being able to find any other means of escape, threw herself out the window onto the hard-packed icy snow. She was so stunned that at first we thought she was dead; but in a little while she came to herself, for God wished to keep her for a while.

The Sisters finally found our Reverend Mother, who began to breathe again, although she was still anxious at not being able to find me. All our boarders were gathered near her, almost dying of the cold, for they had on nothing but their little shirts—everything else having been destroyed. What caused me the greatest pain was the sight of what our poor invalid was suffering. If she had had as much strength as she had courage, she and I could have saved some of the things from our dormitory, but she was so weak that when she tried to cart away her mattress, her arms dropped helplessly and I could do nothing to help her but throw my free arm about her and do my best to save her. I had thrown my habits out the window, but they caught on the railing outside the refectory, where they were burned with everything else. Thus I was as naked as all the others who, standing in the snow and watching the frightful furnace before them, continued to pray to God.

It is difficult to say how long after the event and by what means they learned the origin of the fire. In another account, written a few years later, Marie noted that the responsibility was that of a lay novice who was in charge of making the bread that month. The Acts of Profession of the monastery have no record of a lay Sister during that period. The *Jesuit Journal*, however, under May 3 of the following year, notes, "Sister St. Michel, Françoise Capel, left the Ursulines."⁴ Perhaps, then, it was little Sister St. Michel who was the "poor child" responsible for the fire and whom Marie gently cloaks in anonymity. She herself must have disclosed the cause of the fire, for nothing in the smoldering ruins could have given the clue to its origin. When and under what circumstances she confessed her carelessness is never made known, but what she

must have suffered as she saw the enormous consequences of her negligence must have been close to unendurable. This strange, obscure little figure whose human frailty God used for his own designs appears for only a moment and is never seen again. It was a miracle, the townspeople said, that no one had been injured in the fire, and the nuns agreed; yet for Marie, the real miracle was that miracle of grace which enabled them to accept their misfortune with tranquil hearts. Marie acknowledged later that even during the most frenzied moments of the fire, the Spirit of God moved so sweetly within her that she felt that all her actions were directed by His presence. Later when her niece wrote to ask what she could do to help relieve their poverty, Marie answered, ". . . I personally seem to need nothing . . . the peace of heart that I experience, makes me blind to all my needs."

The weeks that followed, difficult though they were, had about them the sweetness of charity. All Quebec rallied to help these religious who began the new year in total poverty. The Jesuits by unanimous vote agreed to give up desserts in order to give them to the Ursulines, "who have more need of these sweets than we do."⁵ The nuns of the Hôtel Dieu assured them that they were to consider themselves part of the family, and that they were welcome to stay throughout the winter. In the month that followed, the destitute Ursulines grew very close to these nuns whose refectory they shared and with whom they chanted office from borrowed breviaries and in borrowed habits. When, on January 21, they did leave the Hôtel Dieu they cemented the bonds of friendship by drawing up a reciprocal agreement to share in each other's prayers and good works.⁶ The fire, which had destroyed much, had fanned the flames of charity.

Even while the ashes of their old home continued to smolder, Mother St. Athanase went with Father Ragueneau, Governor D'Ailleboust, and some other advisers to view the site and come to some conclusion about the future. The consensus of opinion was that the religious should begin to build again on the old foundations which had been tested and proved solid, constructed as they were on bedrock. No help from France could be counted on, since letters telling of the tragedy would not reach the mother country until the following summer. The townspeople, however, assured the religious of contributions towards erecting a new con-

vent and school and that, over and above this, a reasonable loan could be arranged.

Once this decision was taken, the nuns' energies began to wax, and plans for their new monastery to emerge. When Marie wrote to Claude the following summer, she could announce triumphantly that despite all rumors to the contrary, the Ursulines were going to remain in Quebec:

Perhaps you will say, along with many other of our friends, that it would be better for us to return to France than to put ourselves in the path of new risks, for certainly everything here is very hazardous because of the Iroquois. The whole matter has been deliberated on by the top men of the country, who have shown us in this incident the goodness of their hearts and the care with which they want to protect us. The conclusion is that we shall not leave, but shall put ourselves in a position where we will serve God according to our vocation, which, thanks to His mercy, is stronger than ever. For I must tell you, my very dear Son, that we have received such assurances of grace and courage that the more we are despoiled of all material things the more His grace abounds in us.

Had it not been for Madame de la Peltrie, the Ursulines' stay at the Hôtel Dieu would have been much longer than three weeks; but their foundress, who had built herself a little two-story house just east of the monastery, now offered this to the nuns for as long as they needed it. The house, built for Madame de la Peltrie and a servant, quaked before the onslaught of thirteen religious and some of their Indian charges. Thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, it was the "Louvre" (as they had whimsically called this first convent) all over again, and a kind of gaiety stole over them as they heaved and squeezed to make room for themselves and their scanty possessions. Little as they had, it was more than the house could accommodate. But soon bundles and children and nuns were allocated to huddled quarters where they would have to make the best of things for the next few months, since nothing could be done on the new monastery until the spring thaw. This tiny house had to suffice for chapel, parlor, refectory, dormitory—for everything except for their classes, which they held in a bark shelter constructed by the Indians.

Spring came at last, and on May 19, Madame de la Peltrie laid

the cornerstone for their new home. Marie, to whom Mother St. Athanase had given charge of the convent finances, had worked throughout the winter on plans for the convent as well as on the financial arrangements which would sustain them. She had been helped greatly by the practical advice of François Le Mercier, one-time missionary among the Hurons, who in a few years would succeed Father Ragueneau as superior of the missions. In June, however, Marie's burdens were increased, for she was elected to replace Mother St. Athanase as superior, with Mother St. Joseph re-elected as assistant. Although she had had a presentiment that this burden might fall to her share, this did not alleviate her sorrow. Writing to Claude she noted, "I have resumed the charge of superior, which involves me in new cares and gives me a very heavy cross to carry; . . . I find no comfort except in the help of our divine Mother and Mediatrix." And yet, characteristically, she is able to add: "Do not think, however, my dear Son, that all this disheartens me. When I began this establishment it was in dependence on divine Providence . . . His hand is not shortened, and if He has withdrawn it for a time, He can extend it to us again and overwhelm us with blessings if He chooses."

One of the unique graces of this period of Marie's life was her devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In the fall of the preceding year, the prioress, Mother St. Athanase, fearful of the dangers which surrounded them, was inspired to make a special act of homage and confidence in the Blessed Virgin, begging her to be herself the true and perpetual superior of the convent. At a ceremony impressive in its simplicity, the entire community took Mary as their principal superior, while Reverend Mother St. Athanase remitted her charge into her hands by the symbolic gesture of placing the keys of her office at the feet of the Blessed Virgin.⁷ When Marie took office the following summer, she felt strongly protected by this heavenly Mother. Although, as she carefully explained, she never saw her with her bodily eyes, yet she was keenly and consistently conscious of her presence.

Although I did not see her, I felt her presence accompanying me in all my comings and goings from the time we began the foundation up to the very end of the work. Whenever I was needed, I went up and down the scaffolding without fear. . . . Sometimes I felt inspired to honor her with some

hymns and antiphons, and I always followed those inspirations. I used to say often, "Dearest Mother, please keep our workmen safe." And truly she guarded them so well that during the whole period of construction no one was hurt.

Despite the fact that everyone did his best to help the religious to rebuild their monastery, the people of Quebec were themselves too poor to make the large contributions necessary for paying the workmen and buying the building supplies. By the summer of 1651, there were few families who had any more than the bare essentials. The Hurons had remained throughout the winter, depending largely on alms for their existence. Marie often grew desperate at the sight of the bills which piled up before her. Yet even with all this effort there was little hope that they would be able to inhabit their new home for another year. In September of 1651 she wrote to Claude:

The foundation of our building is already laid. They are now putting in the fireplaces and in a week they will be ready to erect the framework. If the ships had arrived from France, we would have borrowed the workmen whom our friends are bringing from France; so that we would have been able to use our new lodging in four to six months. But without this help, we will not be able to move in until next year around this time. It is amazing how expensive artisans and workmen are here. We have to pay them from forty-five to fifty-five sous a day. The ordinary workmen get thirty sous a day along with their food.

That the little convent was at that time actually in desperate need is evidenced by the postscript Marie adds to her letter: ". . . we have nothing left but flour for three batches of bread; and the ships from France are still not in sight!"

By late summer an additional worry had been added to that of their poverty. This time it was one of those devious worries composed of gossip and rumor which are so difficult to face or trace. The first hints of it came in letters from the community at Tours. Some of the letters contained veiled allusions; others were blunt and forceful. The subject of the difficulty was a contract said to have been drawn up by Marie twelve years before when she was on the point of sailing from Dieppe. Rumor said that this new contract replaced that which had been agreed to at Paris between

the two congregations of Bordeaux and Paris. The Mothers of Tours had seen and approved the latter before it was signed; now they understood that Marie had made this one void by agreeing to a second contract which did not give the community of Tours its lawful rights. Some suggested that she had acted headstrongly and without the proper authorization; others, more gentle but just as wounding, indicated that they felt that her guilelessness had been played upon by the Jesuits, who wanted as much control as possible placed in their own hands. In any case, they wished Marie to inform them of precisely what had gone on in Dieppe and what were the precise terms of the second contract. Marie, with her natural passion for truth, was enraged at the falsity of the rumors. "Even our fire has not made me suffer any more than this," she wrote to Claude.

Actually there was little she could say on her own behalf except to state that the rumors had no basis, that there had never been a "second contract," that during the months she had spent in Paris she had fought with all her might for the interests of her community at Tours. Her annoyance grew as she read of how she had let herself be fooled, of how she had willingly signed a paper containing clauses prejudicial to the interests of her own community. And yet what wounded her most were the subtle accusations against the integrity of the Jesuits. She blushed when she read that during Jerome Lalemant's recent visit to Tours someone had not hesitated to discuss the rumors quite openly with him, even naming the person who had started them. But Father Lalemant, returning to Quebec, had said nothing of all this but had told her only that he had visited Tours and had been able to clear up "certain points" which had been misunderstood. Her anger was at its height when she wrote to Claude:

What has really caused me the greatest annoyance in all this is the offense to the Jesuit Fathers, who, it is said, were after their own interests. Aside from the question of the respect which is due them, this is a complete falsehood. You have seen by my other letter the great help which they have given us; everyone in need receives the same assistance from them. Both little and great go to them in whatever misfortunes happen to them.

To her niece she wrote in the same vein, adding, "All this has taught me a lesson, that one cannot love purity of heart and silence too much."

It was at such moments that the long separation from France was hard to accept. Letters were always unsatisfactory no matter how hard she tried to make her words match her thoughts. Shades of meaning relying so often on a tone of voice, a gesture, a glance were lost; and while no one intended it, misunderstanding was often the result. This suffering, too, she recognized to be part of that cross which God had promised her with her missionary vocation; and like all the rest she accepted it without a backward glance. Having done what she could to end the gossip, she did her best to put it out of her head and to settle down in their small, narrow little house for another winter.

Marie dreaded the coming of winter, not simply because of its hardships but because she feared that Mother St. Joseph would not survive it. Although she had rallied during the summer months, the intense cold and the poor food of the winter always brought on a fresh attack. Two years before, when her mother had done her best to bring her back to France, she had begged to be kept on in Canada, confiding to Marie that she would rather live on sagamité and die a thousand deaths than be faithless to her mission vocation. God had apparently taken her at her word, for her last years in Quebec were filled to the brim with suffering. Joyous, loving, trustful by nature, she found God the whole meaning of her existence. She loved Him as a child loves, purely, freely, without restraint. Yet before her death, even the spontaneity of this love was to be purified. She confided to Marie that one day after Our Lord had treated her with unusual tenderness, he spoke to her interiorly, saying, "From now on I want you to live only by faith and by the cross."⁸ These words accomplished their own effect, for from that day all the consolations on which she had relied were taken from her. From then until the week of her death, faith was her only light. The cold, gray Canadian winters were but a symbol of that interior desolation and loneliness which was her daily lot. "I suffer so much," she told Marie, "and if you were to ask me who makes me suffer like this, I would have to say that it is the Incarnate Word, it is He whom I love who torments me."⁹

When the Huron refugees left Quebec for an establishment formed for them on L'Ile d'Orléans, the strength went out of her. While the pressure of work had continued, she had managed to keep up; but now that she was no longer responsible for the large groups of adults coming for instructions, her old malady took a new grip on her. On February 2, she carried on her work as usual, even officiating in choir for the feast of the Purification; but by nightfall she had to admit that she could not go on. A discharge of bile had spread throughout her body, affecting particularly her lungs and her chest, which were already badly diseased. Despite the sickness which this new difficulty brought on, she continued to drag herself to the chapel for Mass and Holy Communion and even to some of the spiritual conferences. When Marie begged her to save her remaining strength, she only smiled and asked with incontrovertible logic why, since she was obviously going to die, did a few days one way or the other matter? Was it not better to serve God as well as she could in the little time remaining to her? By the middle of Lent, however, even her heroic fortitude could force her body no more. On March 4, she received Extreme Unction.

The tiny, overcrowded house in which they were forced to spend the winter could provide not even the normal comforts or the privacy of an ordinary pioneer convent. Marie, writing later to the community at Tours, recalled:

Over and above the inevitable pains and fatigue of her sickness, she suffered great inconveniences because of our living conditions. [Our house] was so small that one could not reach the choir without passing near her cot and in full sight of her. The noise of the sandals; the clamor of the children; all the unavoidable comings and goings; the sounds from the kitchen, which was just above her and from which we were separated by only thin planks; the smell of the eels which permeated everything so that even during the worst cold we had to keep the windows open to purify the air; the continual smoke; the sounds of the bell, of the singing, of the chanting; all the noise of the choir, which was so close to her—all this caused her unbelievable suffering and increased the feeling of suffocation in her heart and chest. Since our bunks were placed one above the other, there was one right over her, so that the Sister who slept there could not help but inconvenience her.

Her coughing had grown continual, and one hemorrhage followed another. She confided to Marie one day that she had always been afraid of severe pain because she did not think she had the strength to remain patient under it; she was afraid, too, of dropsy, aware of how difficult this would make it for those taking care of it and hating the further humiliation of being helpless. But God did not spare her; by Holy Week she was afflicted with such severe dropsy that the attending doctor advised making incisions in her legs in an effort to relieve the pressure of the water. Knowing that she was beyond the power of remedies, still she acquiesced; but fearful that she might not live through the pain, she begged Marie to send for Father Lalemant, who remained with her throughout the operation. The incisions did little beyond increasing her pains immeasurably. When a few days later gangrene set in, she was not surprised. Pain and fever now became too strong for her, and she lapsed into unconsciousness. So she remained, while Easter came and went bringing its muted alleluias. It was not until Wednesday of Easter Week that she regained consciousness. Having purified her by suffering, God took compassion on her and at the end restored that sense of trust and peace and childlike love which had been the fiber of her life. The death agony began, but still she lived on. It was not until Thursday, about eight in the evening, that she slipped away so peacefully and sweetly that the moment of her going almost escaped her watching Sisters.

The tears which Marie expected never came; instead the house was filled with a silent joy. A sense of fulfillment came upon them as they fixed the emaciated body for its funeral. What difference now the months of desolation and uncertainty, the unalleviated agony of the past few weeks? Faithful and true, never deviating a hair's breadth from her consecration, she had ratified her fidelity by her death.

The new monastery was finished now and into it were carried the mortal remains of Mother St. Joseph so that the funeral ceremony might be carried out with fitting solemnity. At ten o'clock the following morning, a solemn Requiem was celebrated by Father Lalemant. The chapel was crowded, for Mother St. Joseph had known how to make friends: the Governor, the Jesuits, her Hurons, the crowd of children whom she had taught over the past thirteen years, her Sisters, and her superior. It was her superior

who knew her worth best and who would feel her loss most keenly. A friendship of twenty-two years is not easily broken. They had shared so much together: Marie's first yearning for mission life, her mystic dreams, Mother St. Joseph's shy disclosure of her own aspirations, the first meeting with Madame de la Peltrie, those long weeks of planning at Paris, the perilous crossing. There had been a bond between them which no one else could share. In a letter informing Mother St. Joseph's family of her death, Marie wrote:

I did my best to take care of her. . . . Our Lord has united us in a bond of charity which death itself cannot sever. I assure you that she is never far from me, for I am more with her in spirit now that she is with God than I was during her life.

Her burial was very simple, as she would have wished, with only a small wooden cross to mark her grave. Of this first Ursuline to die in the New World, the convent annalist wrote only: "On the fourth of April in the year 1652, died Marie de la Troche, known as Marie de St. Joseph, aged thirty-six."¹⁰

CHAPTER 17

On the eve of Pentecost, May 17, 1652, the new monastery was finally ready for occupancy. On that day the Blessed Sacrament was carried in solemn procession from Madame de la Peltrie's little house to the new convent chapel, and the ceremony of Forty Hours was begun. For the next three days the townspeople shared the Ursulines' joy, coming each day in procession from one of the churches for solemn Benediction at the new chapel. The joy that the religious felt in being in their new monastery was not unalloyed, however, for they had not accustomed themselves to Mother St. Joseph's empty place. Despite the fact that she had contributed very little to the community in the months preceding her death, still she was keenly missed. It was not what she had done that was missed, but rather the intangible quality of her presence. She had radiated the joyousness of total consecration; and when people began to come to the monastery begging for some little thing that belonged to her, asking permission to pray at her grave, reporting that their prayers to her had brought extraordinary help, her Sisters were not surprised. She was especially in their thoughts as they assisted at Mass on September 7, for some years before, Madame de la Troche had sent money for a Mass in honor of St. Anne to be said each year on her daughter's birthday.

Despite the unsettled condition which still continued throughout the colony, on August 29 the Ursuline monastery received its first Canadian-born postulant. She was Genevieve Bourdon, daughter of Jean Bourdon and Jacqueline Potel, who was just beginning her fifteenth year. Her vocation was not surprising, since she had come from a home which nurtured such a spirit. Of the six Bourdon children, four of them were destined for the cloister—two at the Hôtel Dieu, and two with the Ursulines.

Genevieve soon learned that life in the monastery had about it more of the pinch of poverty than even that frugal existence in which she had been brought up on the Coteau St. Genevieve. Quebec in 1652 was in precarious straits. Tragedy was making inroads everywhere and in every shape. The first ship, on which the colonists always counted so heavily for provisions, had foundered on the rocks as it came up the St. Lawrence; in an effort to save those aboard, much of the cargo destined for Quebec had been abandoned. Of this loss, Marie commented: "All our flour was lost, and everything else badly damaged," adding, "if they do not send us anything next year it will put the country in a pitiful state."

With the spring thaw, the Iroquois, while making no full-scale attacks, increased their forays on outlying posts. Each week brought its own list of tragedies: a young French boy captured and burned alive outside of Montreal; a Frenchman mortally wounded directly across from Three Rivers; an inhabitant of Montreal shot in his field; near Quebec a whole family of Christian savages wiped out. On June 28, Father Ragueneau had confirmation of the rumor that another Jesuit was lost: Father Jacques Buteux had been ambushed and killed on his return to the Attikamegues, where he had conducted a successful mission the year before.

Yet in the midst of the carnage, the culture of the mother country continued to be disseminated. That year the citizens of Quebec proudly announced the production of two dramas of Corneille: *Héraclius*, followed some months later by *Le Cid*.¹ The Jesuits, always intent on the primary task of evangelization, were never content simply to produce such classical works without inserting some passage of moral instruction or, even better, a graphic depiction of the horrors of hell or the pains of purgatory so that the audience would be edified as well as entertained. The audience, not brought up in the classical tradition, applauded enthusiastically; and the Indians who attended seemed generally more impressed by the moral interlude than by Corneille's original genius.

Although with the departure of the Hurons the number of their pupils had decreased, the Ursulines found themselves extremely busy in getting settled in their new monastery. Marie, writing to

one of her Sisters in Tours, admits that she has no time for letters except late at night. Always, of course, there was time for letters to Claude. In the fall she wrote: "A northeaster has detained a ship in our harbor, and I would not rest content without taking a moment to write to you." This is her introduction to a letter of more than 2500 words!

Despite work and anxiety, Marie maintained that peace of heart which God had restored to her several years before. When the burden of superiorship had fallen on her again in June of 1651, she had felt in some mysterious way that she was to offer herself to God as a victim not through any extraordinary suffering but simply as a continual sacrifice to the divine will. In attempting to describe to Father Lalemant this tendency of her soul, she used, almost interchangeably, the three concepts of purity, poverty and victimhood. From her earliest days in the spiritual life, the word "purity" had always had a profound significance for her. God was purity, a "great sea of purity," as she had once written, and it was necessary that the soul lose itself in Him in order to become pure. Her own quest for purity was less an acquisition of virtue than an abandonment within the measureless purity of the Divinity. Frequently, however, she used the term "poverty" to signify much the same thing. For her, poverty was a far more extensive concept than simply a lack of material possessions. Through the years, as she had been despoiled of so much in terms of human affection, interior consolation, and even spiritual help, she had come to recognize that spiritual poverty was a virtue which purified the most profound faculties of the soul. The peace and love resulting from this purification were unshakable, since they depended not on the vagaries of circumstances or emotion but on the immutability of God Himself. Thus to be truly poor was to be pure and, ultimately, to be a victim of His love.²

She had long since passed through that troublesome period of the spiritual life where the soul is preoccupied with its own progress, its own virtue, its own love, and had come at last to that vast sea which she called purity and which might equally well be called selflessness. The long years of struggle against fear and desolation had, because of her fidelity, brought a wonderful harvest of confidence and trust. Her faith and hope and love had been cruelly tried both in the temporal and spiritual order; but valiant woman

that she was, she had cried like Job, "Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him."

When Claude wrote to her of his own spiritual trials, she had no difficulty in understanding his problems or suggesting suitable remedies:

It is necessary, my dearest Son, that we go through various temptations and afflictions in order to come to that purity of body and soul that God asks of us. And for this we must have great courage and be absolutely merciless with ourselves—otherwise we shall never advance in this path of the spirit. All the saints have had to go through this in order to attain their sanctity. Although I do not put myself among their number, for I am still a great sinner, just look, if you will, at what I have undergone for more than seven years and even before that. . . . It is not possible to live for very long in the spiritual life without going through these trials.

There is, however, a note of weariness, if not of impatience, as she listens again and again to Claude returning to the same point of attack. From the time he was a postulant, she had had to write periodically to caution him against cutting things too fine, against losing his freedom of spirit in all sorts of indeterminate speculations; yet even now, in his mid-thirties, Claude still seemed incapable of that trust in God which alone could free him from this scrupulous habit of mind. It was this which she had in mind when she wrote, "Turn your back on those problems which trouble your soul; otherwise you are going to find yourself in a dangerous state. . . ."

Her life, although full to overflowing with problems of all sorts, maintained a poise which kept her miraculously free from complexity. She admitted only one motive in her life: the known will of God, which must be accepted and effected at all costs. This is what she attempted to make her son realize as she answered a letter in which Claude indicated that his doubts and anxieties extended even to his salvation:

I am asking you quite openly why you remain so fearful, for I have no doubt that this is a temptation or trial that God is permitting for your purification. He often does this to souls whom He wishes to advance in the spiritual life. But if they are not on their guard, they are held back by the very thing which

was given to them for their advancement, not using this trial according to God's plan. Instead of humbling and abandoning themselves to His conduct, without curiously seeking to know what He has in store for them, they lose time in all kinds of useless reflections. My dearest Son, God has wonderful treasures of goodness for simple souls who trust themselves to Him. . . . You must believe that we have a God who has cared for us in every minute of the past and who will continue to do so in the future.

Her trust in God's care must have been sorely tempted when in September of 1653 more ships arrived from France, yet none of them bearing the expected troops of soldiers.

In addition to their disappointment over receiving none of the promised military help, the inhabitants of Quebec were still worried about the fate of Antoine Poncet, who, the preceding August, had been taken captive by the Iroquois. With a young companion, Mathurin Franchetot, he had gone to Sillery to help a French widow harvest her grain. They had barely begun their work when the Iroquois set upon them. Marie, describing this event in a letter to the Ursulines of Dijon, wrote:

When the news reached Quebec, the colonists, who loved him like a father, took their arms and ran after the savages to deliver him from their hands. They followed so closely on their heels that in less than three hours they had almost overtaken them, for they found a fire still glowing in a spot which [the Indians] had just left. After visiting this place, they found a sign written in charcoal on a tree from which the bark had been stripped: "Father Poncet, and another, Francheteau." Further on, they found the Father's book [breviary] which he had left behind on purpose. On opening it, they read the words: "We have been captured by Agnerognons; so far they have treated us very well."

The initial courtesy which was shown to him did not last long, however, for Father Poncet was soon subjected to the brutal beatings generally accorded Iroquois prisoners. By the time his "welcome" was complete, he was bruised almost to unconsciousness, his nails had been torn off, and one finger had been hacked away by a little boy no more than five. The fire was already flaming about the torture stake when the chiefs decided not to kill him

but to give him as a slave to an old Indian woman. His companion, Mathurin Franchetot, fared less well; the following day he was removed to another village where, the Iroquois told Poncet, he was burned to death. A few weeks after the Jesuit's captivity, an Iroquois chief arrived to tell his people that Poncet was an extremely important man, that all Quebec mourned his loss, and that various proposals for his release had already reached him. This apparently fitted into the Iroquois plan for overtures of peace with the French. Poncet immediately began to be treated as an important personage. He was taken to Fort Orange, where the Dutch treated his wounds and outfitted him with European clothes. Following this, preparations were made for an embassy of peace to escort him to Quebec. On the 28th of October, he passed through Three Rivers; and on November 7, he arrived at Quebec, where a triple cannonade from the fort sounded his arrival.

Although experience had taught the French that little could be hoped for from the expressions of good will so facilely articulated by the Iroquois, yet they felt that nothing could be lost by entering into negotiations. Any refusal on their part would be interpreted as an act of hostility, and Quebec was in no position to inaugurate hostilities. Peace proposals had been going on even during the captivity of Father Poncet, and the French felt that the Iroquois had manifested their sincerity in returning him to Quebec as they had promised. At first there was a certain uneasiness in accepting the peace, but as the months continued unmarked by their usual atrocities, the colonists settled back to enjoy their new security.

With the peace came a renewal of pupils at the Ursulines, and Marie commented happily on the increase of boarders, the resurgence of trade, and the general sense of ease which permeated the town. It was an optimistic account that she wrote to a religious of the monastery of Selles-sur-Cher:

We are as well lodged as before . . . we have debts, it is true, but they are going to diminish and we deal with people who don't press us. . . . Now that peace is made we have more than enough to do, so much so that if anything happened to one of us we would, of necessity, have to get some Sisters from France. Providence is a good mother when one leans more heavily on her than on human forces, which are always weak and inconstant.

Providence was indeed showing herself a generous mother, for with the growth of the boarding school came a commensurate growth in the community. During that year two postulants asked admission: one as a choir nun and the other as a coadjutrix Sister. The latter was Françoise Ouyn, a thirty-three-year-old Frenchwoman from Dieppe who sailed in the company of Father de Lionnes with the express purpose of becoming an Ursuline coadjutrix Sister. Her voyage was counted as part of her novitiate, and she was clothed with the Ursuline habit and given the name of St. Magdeleine on October 21, feast of St. Ursula.³

The other postulant was a well-known figure whose entrance caused something of a civic stir, for she was Marie-Barbe D'Ailleboust, wife of the former Governor. Of a wealthy Parisian family, she had married Louis D'Ailleboust in 1635 at a wedding which was one of the events of the social season. She had always been what her spiritual directors refer to as a "chosen soul"; and even her marriage was, apparently, undertaken under spiritual direction. The Jesuit who guided her spiritual life made it clear to her husband that Marie-Barbe should preserve her virginity in marriage. If her young husband felt any objections, they were dealt with summarily—if we can trust legend—by the prophetic words addressed to him by the priest who presented his wife to him:

Here is a young virgin whom God is confiding to your care so that you may be her guardian. If you forget the promise you have made or show the temerity to violate her purity in any way, God will let His punishments fall upon you.⁴

Although poor Louis struggled for some years against what Marie-Barbe's eulogist calls his "temptation," his wife won her battle. When, however, his wife began talking about leaving him to enter the cloister, the soldier in D'Ailleboust won over the husband and he absolutely refused his consent. But Marie-Barbe, for all her piety, was not a woman who could be crossed, and by 1643, three years after she and her husband had left Quebec to return to Montreal, the weary husband acceded to his wife's request. Her religious life was, nevertheless, of short duration. The *Annals* comment simply: "After about a month of trial, recognizing that she did not have the strength to observe the rule, she left and

returned to her husband to continue their ordinary life of devotion."⁵

During the winter of 1654, Marie was hard at work not only with the business of the convent but with writing in full an account of her spiritual life to satisfy Claude's importunate demands. Despite the inconveniences of diet and climate, her health remained surprisingly robust, and her ability to work at top speed did not diminish with the years. Describing her physical condition to Claude she wrote:

As far as my health is concerned, it is really quite good; I have not yet experienced any of the difficulties that come with age except that my sight has failed a little. I have taken to using glasses, and with these I see as well as I did when I was twenty-five. They also help to alleviate the persistent headache which I used to have. I find I am becoming a little stout, but people of my temperament have a tendency to that over here.

Despite her failing eyesight, she set out in earnest to compose a detailed account of her life from her childhood until the present. This was not the first time she had set herself to this task. While still a novice, she had composed such an account for her spiritual director, Father de la Haye, making a copy of this for her superior as well. When she had asked Mother St. Bernard to return this to her so that it might be destroyed with other private papers before she left for New France, her superior refused to do so. Mother St. Bernard, recognizing it as a precious document, had no intention of seeing it consigned to the flames. When Marie described this incident to Claude in a letter of 1653, he set out immediately to discover this valuable manuscript; but it was not until after his mother's death twenty years later that he fell heir to it at last.

In the year preceding the fire, Marie had once again set herself to the task of a spiritual autobiography, this time in response to Claude's demands. However, this along with everything else had been destroyed, as she explained to Claude the following summer. Writing at any length during the winter was a difficult task: first, because the ink was often frozen; second, because since one had to sit close to the fire, it was not easy to achieve the necessary privacy, especially for such a work as she was engaged upon. Some-

how, however, the task was completed and she noted triumphantly on August 4, "I have finished my notebooks."

On August 9, she wrote at length to Claude, explaining the composition of her account, her purpose in writing it, and exhorting him to keep it for himself alone. There were, in all, three quarto-size notebooks of sixteen pages each.⁶ She had found it a laborious task, admitting, "Twenty years ago I would have been able to do a much better piece of work and with far greater ease." Fearful that Claude, with his scholar's precision, might be disappointed in what she was sending him, she warned him ahead of time:

Please don't think that these notebooks that I am sending you have followed any predetermined order as more mature works would do. Whenever I took up my pen to begin, I hardly knew a word I was going to write; but while writing, the spirit of grace led me so that I wrote whatever He pleased . . . there have always been so many interruptions and I have had to work amid all the distractions of domestic affairs.

Yet even after the task was completed, she hesitated to trust it to the ordinary mail lest her papers fall into alien hands. She was relieved then when she learned that Father Lionnes was returning to France and would be happy to take any packet she might have directly to Claude, who at this time was prior of St. Nicaise de Meulan near Versailles. Such was her fear, however, that others might see this account of her spiritual favors that, before the last ship left that fall, she stopped to write two more short letters to Claude, begging him to keep her secrets at all costs and concluding: "Should you happen to fall sick and be in danger of death, please throw them into the fire; or better, send them to my niece, who would be glad to keep them for me. These are the conditions, my dear Son; I am very meticulous on this point, but I think you are clear-sighted enough to understand why." Yet despite the assurance which Claude gave to his mother the following year, no admonition could stop him in his insatiable pursuit of biographical materials.

As Marie tried to snatch a little time to finish the promised account, the streets of Quebec were alive with the tall, arrogant figures of the Iroquois ambassadors. Even in peace there was a

fierceness about them as they strode with their cloaks flung free from their shoulders and their naked bodies painted and tattooed with mystic symbols and designs. Throughout the winter they had continued their promises of peace, and in July of 1654 had returned to speak at greater length with Governor Lauson and the Jesuit Fathers. At an assembly held on August 10, important offers were made, and the Jesuits were delighted when one of the chiefs requested that a mission be started in Iroquois territory. Although it was the same request that had led to the death of Isaac Jogues twelve years before, the priests, with that resilient hope which was one of the chief characteristics of their zeal, already imagined the immeasurable good that such a mission might bring not only to the savages but to the colony as a whole. Even Marie, never given to castles in the air, wrote an expansive account to Claude of all that might be hoped for as a consequence of the proposed settlement:

If this peace lasts, as there is reason to hope it will, the country will be in an excellent condition for French establishments, which are on the increase and which maintain themselves sufficiently through the cultivation of the land. This land becomes fertile as soon as the great forests, which tend to keep out the sun, are cut down. After three or four years of labor they are quite satisfactory and in some places even better than those in France. They can furnish food both for the cattle raised for beef and those for milk products. This peace helps to increase trade as well, especially the beaver trade, which is very great this year since one is able to go hunting everywhere without fear. But it is the trade in souls which is the happiness of those who have crossed the seas in search of them and thus win them for Jesus Christ. We are hoping for a great harvest through this opening with the Iroquois. The savages who live some distance from here say that above their country there is a very wide river which leads into a big ocean which is thought to be that of China. If in time this is found to be true, the way will have been considerably shortened and made easy for the workers of the Gospel to go into these vast and populous kingdoms. Time will tell.

The following July another council was held in Quebec. The Iroquois were again abroad in the streets in great numbers, and the nuns soon found their monastery the center of interest. In particular they were visited by the captains of the tribes, who were

amazed at the training and discipline carried on in the boarding school. From their own meager rations the nuns were obliged to prepare two big feasts for the visiting savages in order to manifest sentiments of peaceful hospitality. One of the Iroquois women—a captain of her tribe—brought her troop several times to watch the training and order carried on in the seminary. Describing this to Claude, Marie wrote:

They took unusual pleasure in seeing and hearing our boarders, and especially a little Huron of about ten whom we are making into a little French girl. She knows how to read, write, and sing in three languages: Latin, French, and Huron. Afterwards she gave a catechism lesson to her companions, and even made a little speech to the chief of the troop expressing her great pleasure in the peace which had been established and in the fact that they were going to bring some of the Fathers into their country.

An even greater joy was hers before the peace council was concluded; for before returning to their home, two Iroquois asked for baptism, and the ceremony was carried out by Father Chaumonot in the Ursulines' chapel. "You can imagine," Marie wrote, "the zest with which we sang the *Te Deum*. There were tears in our eyes and a great joy in our hearts as we watched those who had so recently destroyed Christianity now embracing it with such devotion and becoming children of God."

That fall, Fathers Chaumonot and Claude Dablon, recently arrived from France, set off for Iroquois country with the promise that the desired French settlers asked for by the Indians would follow in the spring. On October 4, Chaumonot wrote to Marie, promising her that her dream of having some Iroquois children in the boarding school was not far from fulfillment:

My dear Reverend Mother,

Tomorrow, if it please God, we shall lose sight of the last dwellings of our friends to go to seek those of our enemies. The wife of our Iroquois captain is being instructed on the way with six others, both men and women, in addition to our Christian Hurons and our two Iroquois from Sonnontouan. . . . In all there are eighteen persons who pray to God night and morning. I commend to you this little traveling church with

its pastors. Our captain has begged me to write to you that she will keep her word, and that she will send you, not her daughter, who is too small, but one of her sisters who is of the same age as Marie, your little Huron girl. . . . She begged me to write to you that she would no longer offend Him who has made all; and that from the bottom of her heart she wishes to live and to die a Christian. She sends greeting to her adopted child, Marie—your Huron—and to all the Mothers. For my part I add, may they pray to God for her complete conversion.

Your humble servant in Our Lord,

ECHON⁷

Despite the joy and optimism which the peace had brought, Marie had been struggling throughout the winter with one of the most painful crosses ever laid upon her: two of her religious had made the decision to return to France. Anne des Seraphins of Ploërmel and Anne de St. Cécile of Tours had reached the conclusion that their health could not longer endure the privations of the mission. The former had arrived in Canada in 1643, and the latter in 1644. Their decision had not been made hastily; for five years the matter had been under discussion. Even before the final decision had been reached, Marie had written to Claude:

At present I am in the midst of a matter which has caused me very great suffering of late. Two of our Sisters wish to return to France to the houses of their profession. One is from Tours, the other from Ploërmel in Brittany; thus they are from two different congregations. The first has been with us for more than eleven years, and the other for more than twelve. For more than five years now I have been fighting against this plan of theirs, begging them to remain faithful to their vocation; but God has not given sufficient grace to my words to keep them here. You can easily imagine that wavering spirits such as these do not fit into a community very well. I can't say any more about it. It is enough to tell you that this is the cross I wanted to speak to you about at the beginning of my second period as superior. It is not that they are not good subjects; they are leaving us with peace and cordiality, with the permission of their superiors in France, and because of their poor health—which is certainly real enough. And yet it would seem much sweeter were they to die in our arms. . . .

The *Annals* add little to Marie's spare account except to say that these religious, having been received with joy, struggled determinedly against the hardships of the country; but their health being impaired, they were forced to return to their convents in 1655.⁸

Laconic as Marie's statement is, it provides clues that future events will illuminate. Had it been simply a question of ill health, the event would certainly not have been so grave a cross as Marie indicates. No one could have been afflicted with more delicate health than Mother St. Joseph, and yet never did Marie suggest an attitude other than kindness and generosity. She put her finger on the difficulty, it would seem, when she remarked that lack of resolution ill accorded with the spirit of the community. There had undoubtedly been a certain friction during the last few years, a friction that could very easily be brought about by one or two malcontents, especially in a group that did not number over a dozen. One can conjecture no further; but it is not hard to envision the constrained atmosphere generated by a certain spirit of criticism, a hesitancy in accepting a proportion of the work, a constant reminiscing of how things were in France. How shaken Marie was by their final decision to return home can be seen in the last line of a letter to an old friend where she begs, "Dearest Mother, beg for me from the divine goodness the grace of perseverance and fidelity to my vocation in the service of this new Church."

Even after their departure, the affair was far from ended. During the following summer, Marie received a letter from Tours which pierced her to the heart. Its author was Mother St. Catherine, superior of the Tourangelle house, and its burden was a confidential inquiry into the government of the Ursuline mission in Canada. The report which Mother St. Cécile had given upon her return to Tours had been far from favorable, and Mother St. Catherine wished Marie to have an opportunity to justify and explain the points under examination. It was the second time within five years that misunderstanding between the parent house in Tours and its daughter monastery in Quebec had reached a dangerous pitch. Aside from the pain which misunderstanding on the part of those she loved most must have caused

her, Marie suffered still more because of the violation of truth which was involved.

In an effort to explain her position and to provide an elucidation of the "confusion of facts" which had been presented at Tours, she reviewed briefly all those elements pertinent to the problem of union since the first plans for the Canadian Mission: the difficulties in Paris, the favoritism shown by the Jesuits toward the Paris Congregation, her own firmness in this matter, the changes necessitated in Quebec (she and Mother St. Joseph took the fourth vow of instruction of girls, while Mother St. Croix accepted the Tourangelles habit), and finally the effort to draw up a daily order agreeable to both Congregations. She recalled the renewed problems with the arrival of Mothers St. Athanase and St. Claire, the first missionaries from Paris, who had been assured that the religious from Tours would simply adjust to the Paris rules. Yet, explained Marie, once these two religious were persuaded that real union must involve mutual adaptation, they agreed to their share of the sacrifice. But when the matter of a daily rule was brought up for consideration, Marie had been hard pressed to withstand the pressure exerted upon her. Of this difficulty she wrote:

... as to our regulations which changed all the customs and manner of acting of our daughters, this was for them a bitter circumcision, even though everything was done in a spirit of justice and fair play. . . . they didn't want to force us openly, but underhandedly I was pushed by a hundred different persuasions, which was far more painful and crucifying to me than any open show of violence.

This, however, had been but the beginning of the difficulty. For when in June of 1644, Mother St. Cécile and Mother de Notre Dame arrived from Tours, they assumed that, since the rule was at that time only provisional, they had no strict obligation to keep it; nor indeed any obligation to obey the superior of the house, since the government was also only provisional.

One of the complaints of the two who had returned to France had been that there were actually two congregations at Quebec attempting to live under the same roof. At this charge Marie was furious with the anger of a mother protecting its child: the union in Canada had been her dream for which she had fought

and suffered more than anyone would ever know. To have it belittled and misinterpreted by the very ones who had done their best to destroy it was more than her sense of justice could bear. Again she answers:

I beg your pardon, my very dear Mother, but we are not two congregations here but only a single one composed of two groups living in a very close and intimate union according to the spirit of God. I assure you that we are so well united that we do not even give any thought as to whether we are all of the same community. When we think of our congregations in France, it is only to unite ourselves to them by mutual charity and an association of prayers. Time will tell that this union was desired and ordained by God. It is true that, according to human appearances, we would have had less difficulty in the question of union had we all been of the same house; but, my dear Mother, who then would have helped with our subsistence? For I am well aware that we would have had to return to France more than ten years ago if the only help we had was from you and the nuns of Angers. Not that we must judge purely on temporal grounds; for if God had wished it otherwise he would have given us more than we have had so far. But today I see two bodies united in our interests to pray for us as well as to give us that material assistance which helps us to keep our rule and maintain our institute to the admiration of this new Church.

It seemed that there was little more they could say to hurt her; but there was one more arrow left in the quiver, the sharpest and straightest of all: their final complaint was that the Quebec house was accomplishing little or nothing, that it was in a word useless. As Marie read the accusation, she saw beyond her window the convent cemetery and the white cross marking Mother St. Joseph's grave. She had worked and sacrificed and prayed until there was no strength left in her. Next to her were the graves of the little Indian boarders who had died in her arms, baptized souls whom she had won for the kingdom of God. Beyond the city on the plains of L'Île d'Orléans lived an uncounted host of those whom she had instructed in her last effort to sow the seed of the Gospel. And these were only the few visible fruits of a life dedicated without question or reserve. It was not herself that Marie wished to justify but Mother St. Joseph, Mother

St. Athanase, the whole group of her nuns, choir and coadjutrix, who in their daily lives she knew to be souls consecrated to the cause of Christ. Her pen was almost bitter as she began her reply:

Their third complaint—or rather, pretext—is that we do nothing here, that we are useless in Canada. Perhaps they had such great courage that all that we did, big though it was, seemed paltry to their zeal. But this is to judge their interior dispositions and that belongs to God alone. I wish to penetrate no further in that area. As far as externals go, it is an open fact that since our re-establishment after our fire, our boarding school has obviously grown. The number of our children has increased so much and we have been so overcrowded that I have been forced, much to my regret, to refuse several people, who went away with tears in their eyes while I cried in my heart. Before God, this is the truth, my dearest Mother, and I assure you that we are now so overworked that we will not be able to go on without help. Everybody here knows this, and even more, God knows it; that is enough for us.

She had stated the facts. There was little more that she could say; and yet, once again, she recognized how inadequate the written word is. "God knows and that is enough" she had written and, indeed, it would have to be, although she did not minimize the suffering that this misunderstanding caused her. She longed to be able to discuss it at length and face to face, especially with Mother St. Bernard, to whom she had always confided everything. But this, too, must be abandoned to divine Providence; and so she closed the letter, hoping that it would be interpreted by understanding hearts: "I think that this should suffice to justify our community with you and with our other Mothers. You are fair and just; please judge this affair yourself, my dearest Mother." The answer she received is not extant and there is no way of conjecturing what it might have contained, for Marie never again alluded to this affair.

It did, however, make her very wary of asking for subjects from France; and yet, with the increasing number of pupils, they were badly in need of additional help. Although at the beginning they had felt that their Indian pupils could be trained for religious life, they had now come to the conclusion that the

savages were incapable of adjusting to the constant discipline demanded by a religious rule. Although they responded generously to the devotions suggested to them and often showed themselves of superior intelligence, they had an ingrained love of freedom which sooner or later made it impossible for them to endure the restraint of the cloister. The freedom of the forests was a call too strong for them to resist, and those who did try generally found that their health was weakened through the white man's regime. Through all the years only one Huron had asked admission and this was to the Hôtel Dieu, where, after less than a year, she fell dangerously ill. She was given the religious habit and on her deathbed was permitted to make her vows, although she was then only fifteen years of age.⁹ If the Canadian convents were to expand, it would have to be through Canadian vocations, although, as Marie wrote, these were scarce. Some who might have vocations were so poor that they could provide no dowry; and since the monastery itself could just make ends meet, it was imperative that its postulants provide something toward their support. In these circumstances, as she wrote to Claude, it was essential that they still receive help from France. They can but hope that those who are sent will have solid mission vocations which will enable them to adjust to the exigencies of pioneer life. Some years earlier, already aware of an element of discontent within the community, she had written to Claude:

We are still afraid that they may send us subjects who are not suitable and who will have difficulty in adjusting to the food, the climate, and the personnel. But what we are even more afraid of is that they will not be docile and may bring with them a spirit very different from ours. If they are not blessed with submission and docility, they will have great difficulty in adjusting and we in putting up with them.

Her prophecy was all too true.

But the monastery on the hill was not the only place where dissension had destroyed the peace. The infant Church itself was publicly torn by dissension between the Jesuits at Quebec and the Sulpicians at Montreal. In an effort to provide a more stable and direct control for the growing post of Montreal, the Crown had asked the newly founded Sulpicians to undertake its care.

To put the full administration of the settlement into the hands of a religious group was an unusual step, but the Sulpicians were efficient men used to running temporal affairs and they acquiesced gladly, sending over four of their men in 1657. Among their number was the Abbé de Queylus, a man of some wealth and power, with undoubted gifts for organization. His generosity and personal interest soon won the colony to him, and it was no great surprise when his name was mentioned as a candidate for the Canadian bishopric.

The question of establishing a bishopric in Canada was an old one. When the Le Gauffre affair had ended abortively in 1647, the matter was dropped for a while. Affairs were becoming increasingly difficult, however, because of the insistent claims of Monsignor de Harlay, Archbishop of Rouen, that Canada was under his episcopal jurisdiction. There was little basis for this claim beyond the fact that many of the priests on the Canadian Mission had sailed from his diocese. The Jesuits, receiving their power directly from the Holy See, had no need of receiving further sanction from Rouen. As early as 1648, however, they had become uneasy at Harlay's pretensions, and Father Vimont had been sent to France to investigate the problem further. The theologians whom he consulted agreed with him that the claim was unfounded, but also advised that, since it was a *fait accompli*, the Jesuits go along with it as far as possible. On this basis Vimont wrote to Harlay asking for the powers of Vicar General for the Jesuit Superior in Canada. This request was granted in 1649. It was not until 1653 that any public announcement was made to the people of Quebec that Canada was under the theoretical jurisdiction of Rouen. Since the Jesuits still retained the power of Vicar General, this news did little to change the ordinary ecclesiastical procedure and aroused little discussion. When, however, the Jesuits learned that De Queylus' name had been suggested for the proposed bishopric, they parried with the name of François Laval. Their influence at court, and especially with Cardinal Mazarin, was notable and soon De Queylus' name was dropped from the list. De Queylus, however, never a man to be easily bested, announced from his post in Montreal that Archbishop Harlay had just appointed him Vicar for all of Canada. On July 29, 1657, he arrived in Quebec to present himself to

Father de Quen, then superior of the mission. De Quen, bewildered, and pacific by nature, said mildly that since his own papers of revocation had not arrived, he would continue to carry out his official duties until they did. De Queylus, infuriated at having his authority questioned, proceeded to take over the parish church, where he preached a sermon so violent in its denunciation of the Jesuits that one of the Fathers later wrote, "He became as crazy at the sight of a Jesuit as a mad dog at the sight of water."¹⁰

One situation which De Queylus found in Quebec played neatly into his scheme for discrediting the Jesuits. Father Antoine Poncet, after his release from his Iroquois captivity in 1653, had been stationed at Quebec. Although always of an independent bent, Poncet now seemed discontented with everything. "Susceptible, suspicious, impatient," one report about him comments. His own letters to the Jesuit General indicate his restlessness and his inability to content himself with the work he was given. Father de Quen, in an effort to help him, placed him in charge of the parish church; soon, however, the superior recognized that Poncet, free from surveillance, was running affairs very much his own way without consulting or advising his superior. In August of 1657 (shortly after the return of De Queylus to Montreal), De Quen, after consulting his council, decided to remove Poncet in favor of Father Pijart, who, at the coming of the Sulpicians, had been relieved of his post at Montreal.

Poncet accepted the decision well but insisted, despite poor health, on being sent on the Iroquois Mission. On his way he stopped at Montreal and met with De Queylus. It took little of the latter's power of persuasion to convince Father Poncet that he had been unjustly treated, that De Quen did not have the power to remove him from his parish, and that he should not give in meekly but return to Quebec to fight out the issue. Accompanied by De Queylus, Poncet returned and was reinstated in his former charge. De Quen, still mild of manner, did his best to keep the issue from becoming a public scandal. He was, however, no match for the vociferous De Queylus. It was not until Poncet saw De Queylus reduce his fellow Jesuits to puppets that he recognized the part he had been coerced into playing. Horrified at the consequences of his own action, he

begged to be sent back to France as soon as possible; De Quen acquiesced, and on September 18, 1657, Antoine Poncet, still bearing the scars of his torture among the Iroquois and the far deeper scars of his own folly, returned to France.¹¹

Thus, at any rate, runs the tale as told by the Jesuit historian Rochemonteix and confirmed by Jesuit documents. August Gosselin, however, in his biography of Bishop Laval, interprets the facts rather differently. Although never favorable to De Queylus, who later was to become Laval's mortal enemy, Gosselin succeeds in placing Poncet in a far more favorable light.¹² De Queylus, in his initial visit to the parish church, had confirmed Poncet in his charge and given him a bull of indulgences accorded by Alexander VII on the occasion of his elevation to the papacy. It was, suggests Gosselin, Poncet's publication of this bull before advising his superior of it which angered De Quen, who within the week had him removed from his office and ordered him off to the Iroquois Mission. Such a re-evaluation of the facts certainly removes some of the stigma from Poncet. It is the superior rather than the subject who, according to Gosselin, comes off rather poorly. That there may well have been more reason for Poncet's conduct than Rochemonteix provides is suggested in the correspondence which Marie continued to carry on with Father Poncet until her death. Her letters are always sympathetic in tone, with veiled allusions to all that he had suffered in Quebec. In one, she admits that she is even hoping that he will be their next superior—an unlikely statement for her to make had Poncet been the capricious and willful missionary that Rochemonteix's evidence suggests.

In any event, once Poncet was out of the way, De Queylus proceeded to take over the parish church himself. He forbade the Jesuits to say Mass, to preach, to hear confessions in this church which they had so proudly helped to build. He questioned the validity of the marriages and religious professions at which they had officiated; he brought action against them, hoping to force them to deliver over their house and grounds and take up residence elsewhere; finally, he addressed a detailed memoir to the Father General in Rome with accusations of all kinds against the superior and his missionaries.¹³

Meanwhile De Quen had written desperately to Archbishop de Harlay begging for some explanations of his own powers and those of De Queylus. Finally on July 11 of 1658, the official act signed by the Archbishop arrived at Quebec:

In order to terminate the differences that have arisen between the Abbé de Queylus and the superior of the Jesuits of the House of Quebec, both having the title of Grand-Vicar in that part of our diocese known as New France; while awaiting what will be more fully provided through our authority, we hereby ordain that the Abbé de Queylus will exercise from this day forward the vicariate which we have given him following all the powers which this ordinance contains in the territory of the isle of Montreal; while the superior of the Jesuits of the House of Quebec will exercise the same powers which we have granted him, without either of these Grand-Vicars having the right to interfere in the other's territory without the other's consent. This act is done and signed at Paris, March 30, 1658.¹⁴

To this, even De Queylus had no answer; and on August 8, he returned "regretfully," as the *Jesuit Journal* notes, to Montreal, leaving behind him a colony shaken to its roots. It was with unalloyed rejoicing that Quebec learned that François Xavier Montmorency de Laval, Abbé of Montigny and Bishop of Petraea, was destined for the Mission of Canada.

CHAPTER 18

Monday, June 16, 1659, had been a full and happy day at the Ursuline monastery. Antoinette Makinon, now Sister St. Marthe, had pronounced her vows. She had come to the monastery from Normandy just two years before with the express purpose of dedicating herself to the Indian Mission. As was then customary, she was permitted to count the voyage from France as her postulantship—a strange probation but an exceedingly practical one, with its bouts of homesickness and seasickness to determine the reality of a subject's vocation.

The news that a ship was sailing up the river had been lost in the general gaiety of the afternoon; but when toward evening the ship dropped anchor and word of its illustrious passenger reached the town, the colonists were galvanized into action. François Xavier Montmorency de Laval, Abbé of Montigny, Bishop of Petraea, and Vicar General of New France had arrived!

Fortunately, it was decided that it was too late for the passengers to disembark that night; and so a short period of grace was given to the inhabitants to get the town ready for its Bishop. The task of planning a suitable reception fell upon the Jesuit Superior, De Quen, and the Governor, Pierre d'Argenson. A more disconcerting problem than that of a reception soon loomed before them: where was the Bishop to live? Since they had had no warning of his coming, no residence had been prepared.¹ The Governor's residence, though suitable in many respects, would not provide a chapel. Since one of the monasteries seemed the most logical choice, Father de Quen offered to establish His Excellency with the Jesuits, at least temporarily.

It seemed ironic that the arrival of the Bishop, which it had anticipated for so long, should at the moment of its actuality

find the colony unprepared. As early as 1633, Charles Lalemant had written to Rome: "Eventually it will be necessary to have a bishop Canada."² And now on every hand the time was ripe for such an appointment. The overt friction which had taken place between De Queylus and the Jesuits in 1657 was manifest proof of the need for a higher court of appeal. In addition, the tense relations between clergy and Governor called for an arbiter, and Father Ragueneau wrote to Rome during this period: "There is only one means to clear up this situation: that is the nomination of a bishop who will not be the enemy of the Company [of Jesus]."³ Even Marie, who some years before had felt that New France was not yet ready for this episcopal dignity, now agreed that it would be a great advantage to have a resident bishop. While her loyalty and gratitude to the Fathers of the Company did not permit her to concur with the charges of ambition and authoritarianism brought against them, she did admit that placing full power in a transcendent authority might be the simplest way of establishing peace. In a letter to Claude, shortly after learning of Laval's appointment, she wrote:

Monsieur de Bernières has informed me—and Father Lalemant has confirmed it—that we are going to get as our bishop the Abbé de Montigny, who is said to be a great servant of God. It will be a wonderful thing for the country to have a permanent superior, and it is time for this to be done, provided that he will be united with the Jesuit Fathers for the zeal of religion; otherwise everything will go against the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Those who are saying that the Jesuits are forming scrupulous consciences in this country are mistaken, I assure you, for we live here in complete liberty of spirit. It is true that they alone have the care of souls, but they constrain no one, and those who are seeking God and who wish to live according to His maxims have peace of heart. It could happen, nevertheless, that in certain cases one would need to have recourse to others; and it is for this reason that we would like a bishop here.

Laval himself, although he had long had his eyes turned to the missions of the East, now turned them westward where the manifest will of God awaited him. With that austere control which marked not only his personal life but also the acts of

his episcopacy, he dropped with a single motion of his will his own cherished dreams and set about preparing himself for his new work with a vigor which was often the admiration and sometimes the dismay of his subordinates. From his consecration in December until he left La Rochelle on Easter Day, April 13, he spent his time assessing the nature and difficulties of the task before him and preparing himself for them. He recognized from the beginning the need of having a staff with whom he could work easily and who, if possible, would have had some experience with the problems of New France. With this in mind, he wrote to the Jesuit General asking that Jerome Lalemant, then rector of the Jesuit College at La Flèche, be permitted to accompany him to Canada.⁴ The Very Reverend Goswin Nickel acceded to the new Bishop's wishes and word was sent to Lalemant that he was to return to Canada. As it happened, this letter did not reach him until April 10, Holy Thursday; but by nightfall he was packed and on his way, arriving at La Rochelle on April 13, just three hours before the vessel was due to raise sail. Although Le Jeune cited Lalemant's immediate departure as a manifestation of his spirit of perfect obedience, it is not difficult to imagine that a certain nostalgia for his old post lent speed to the figure which galloped with such urgency toward the port city where Laval awaited him.

The news that Father Lalemant was on board brought almost as much joy to the people of Quebec as the coming of the Bishop himself. Amid the storms which had beset the country in the years of his absence, no one had been found with his strength and prudence. Father de Quen, who had replaced him as superior, was a little too much of a pacifist to hold to a steady course in the imbroglios created by De Queylus; and as a result, a certain uneasiness had crept into the new Church. Father Dablon, who had been in New France but a few years, wrote with genuine relief to the Father General in the autumn of 1659: "Your Paternity has come to our help just in time. . . . it has revived our courage to have Father Lalemant sent back to us. I can't tell you with what joy we have received him."⁵ Marie's joy in this unexpected blessing was unalloyed, and in jubilation she wrote to Claude:

It is a wonderful thing for the whole country and for us in particular—for myself still more than for anyone else. For I will tell you in confidence that I have suffered very much in being deprived of someone to whom I could confide my spiritual life. All year I have had a feeling that Our Lord was going to send me some help. He did so when it was the right time. May His holy name be blessed forever.

The people of Quebec had, then, a double reason for the triumphant procession which formed at the wharf on the morning of June 17. Laval, garbed in his pontifical vestments, with his miter and staff giving visible proof of the authority he was delegated to wield, stood silent as he watched his flock wend their way down the steep path from the Upper Town. The Jesuits with their pupils led the procession; the Governor followed in full military dress, at his side the Jesuit Superior, only too happy to yield that authority which had caused him so much suffering. They were followed by the various local functionaries, the members of the Indian tribes, and lastly by his people, the sheep of his flock, excited and shy to see the vicar whom God had sent them. The cannon from the fort, old and wheezy, boomed as well as they could, while Quebec's three sets of church bells clamored away in the morning air. And there, to his people kneeling amid the dust and disorder of the quay, François Xavier de Laval gave his first episcopal benediction.

In procession they made their way to the parish church, a stone structure, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, which although begun in 1647 would not be completed and dedicated until 1666. Yet even in its unfinished state it was impressive for a wilderness mission; and Laval wrote to Rome with some complacency that his church was quite adequate for an episcopal cathedral.

No sooner was the reception concluded than the practical events of mission life descended upon the assembled priests. Word was brought of a young Huron close to death; and Laval, eager to exercise his zeal, insisted on going himself to administer the sacraments to the dying man. Before the day was over, he had conferred the sacrament of baptism as well and had endeared himself to his flock by the thoughtful and gentle manner which expressed so well the spiritual depths of his charity. "The

Father of the poor and of everyone," Marie wrote of him to an Ursuline in France. And to Claude, she continued:

Passing over his noble birth—he belongs to the house of Laval, as you know—he himself is a man of very great merit and unusual virtue. . . . I won't say that he is a saint, for that would be going too far. I can say with perfect truth that he lives a saintly and apostolic life. He doesn't know the meaning of human respect. He speaks the truth quite freely to everyone in all his encounters. To put it briefly, his life is exemplary and he has the whole country in admiration.

Meanwhile, however, the question of the Bishop's residence continued to be a problem. He remained with the Jesuits throughout the month of July, but then felt that for various reasons he might be better off at the Hôtel Dieu; here he stayed for three months until November 6. By this time a more fitting arrangement had been made with the Ursulines, who agreed that he could use the little house of Madame de la Peltrie, where some of their boarders were generally lodged. It was an ideal situation for Laval, providing him with the privacy of his own house and garden as well as proximity to the parish church. If the two lumpy beds and the crude wooden chairs and table which comprised its furnishings lacked episcopal elegance, they were quite to the Bishop's taste; for Laval, as his deep-set eyes and rugged features might suggest, was an austere man. For the house, he paid a rent of two hundred pounds a year, which, however, did little to compensate the Ursulines materially for the inconvenience of having to provide for additional boarders in their already crowded quarters. The nuns' joy, however, at having a bishop in their midst, was more than sufficient compensation. Of these arrangements Marie wrote to Claude:

We have lent him our boarding-school building, which is in the corner of our cloistered grounds and very near the parish church. He will have there the convenience and pleasure of a lovely garden. Thus in order that we both be lodged according to canon law, he has had to make a division of our cloister. We will be inconvenienced by this, since we will have to bring our boarders into our lodgings. But it's for a worthy cause, and we are happy to suffer this little annoyance.

Throughout the summer months, Laval kept his staff going at top pace. Less than a week after his arrival, he gave a great feast to the Indians at the Jesuit house, explaining to them his role as their spiritual father and his desire to help them. A week later Quebec had its first pontifical Mass; and on August 24, over a hundred savages were confirmed at the Hôtel Dieu.

Sometime during the same month news had come of the death of Jean de Bernières on May 17. For Marie and Madame de la Peltrie, the loss was a painful one. Although it had been twenty years since they had said good-by to this most constant benefactor, he had remained more than faithful—conducting their business, soliciting alms, encouraging and advising them with his prudent counsel. For François de Laval the loss was equally grave, for he had been one of those disciples who had lived for some time at the hermitage which De Bernières had set up at Caen. It was not the least of this ardent layman's glories that he had shaped the spirituality of a bishop.

The same day that the obsequies for De Bernières were held in the Jesuit chapel, the Fathers of the Company had a guest for dinner. This was the Abbé de Queylus, who had come down from Montreal to pay his respects to the new Vicar General. Although Marie had written earlier to Claude that with the advent of Laval, De Queylus' authority was terminated, it was inevitable that a certain tension should spread abroad when it was learned that De Queylus had returned to Quebec. Laval had early recognized the danger of dissension in the Church of Canada and had determined that the most efficacious way of eliminating it was by making his own primary authority definitively clear. If he had expected difficulty with the Jesuits, it never materialized, possibly because his own rather fulsome praise of them immediately allied them with his cause.⁶ The "affaire De Queylus" was, however, a somewhat different matter, and it was with a certain uneasiness that he greeted his visitor from Montreal. Despite Marie's statement that his authority no longer held, Laval was not so sure. He found no justification for his uneasiness, however, and the two prelates apparently got on very well—so well that Laval invited De Queylus to give the sermon on the feast of St. Augustine, for which he himself said the pontifical Mass. But on September 7, the weather changed. Two letters

arrived for De Queylus; one from Archbishop Harlay, renominating him as his Vicar, and the second from Louis XIV, permitting this nomination with the ambiguous restriction that it should not prejudice the jurisdiction of Laval. With this, as the *Jesuit Journal* comments, De Queylus "raised his mask" and canceled his plans for returning to France. What storms might have followed are all too easy to imagine, for Laval had none of the conciliatory characteristics of De Quen; however, the same fleet brought Governor d'Argenson his own letter from Louis, dated three days after that addressed to De Queylus, and abrogating the arrangement made with the latter. De Queylus submitted; there was nothing else he could do. On September 22, he sailed for France, indicating that he would soon return with a satisfactory solution to what he continued to call "the question of jurisdiction." With his departure Quebec breathed a sigh of relief, but Laval, looking into the future with misgivings, wrote at once to the King, begging him to keep De Queylus on the other side of the ocean.⁷

Marie, and the rest of Quebec as well, soon learned, however, that the pastor whom they had welcomed as an end to all discord was himself to be a sign set for contradiction. On December 3, the *Jesuit Journal* noted sadly that no one had been invited to dinner on the feast of St. Francis Xavier—now even a greater day than ever since it was Laval's patronal feast. "The chief reason," the *Journal* continues, "is that one cannot invite the Bishop without the Governor without causing jealousy, and yet neither one will let the other have first place."⁸ This entry commemorates the initial stage of a long and scandalous estrangement between civil and ecclesiastical power. The first difficulty had come as early as September 7 when the Bishop had refused to let D'Argenson have his chair within the sanctuary during Mass; it was augmented when the innocent thurifer during a high Mass followed the directions of the Bishop for the order of the incensations, thereby incurring the wrath of the Governor, who felt that he had been slighted by not being given the first place.

Pierre d'Argenson had been in Canada only a year at the arrival of Monseigneur de Laval, but even in that short time he had done little to endear himself to the Jesuits. He had

been in office but a few months when Father Ragueneau wrote to Rome that his fears over the state of the country were only aggravated by the new Governor. Although no one questioned his piety and bravery, they were seriously concerned about his refusal to take advice from those experienced in Canadian affairs and his readiness to surround himself with young and incompetent sycophants. During the difficulty with De Queylus, he made it obvious that his sympathy was with the Abbé. Marie alone among the commentators of those years points out that there is much to be praised in Pierre d'Argenson, although she also regrets the type of councilor with which he surrounded himself. Writing to Claude in September of 1660, she noted:

The Governor, on his part, has shown from day to day his zeal for the conservation and improvement of the country. He has set himself to rendering justice to everyone. He is a man of high virtue and above reproach. I informed you in my last letter of the care he has taken for our safety, coming frequently to visit our monastery himself, seeing to its fortification, placing a guard so that we would be out of danger of the Iroquois during the time of their disturbances. Out of consideration for you he has often honored me with his visits over and above those he has paid to our Reverend Mother. There is always something useful in his conversation, for outside of our necessary business affairs he speaks only of God and of virtue, and we are able to talk things over with him as with a person filled with discretion and charity. He assists at the public devotions, being the first to give good example to the French and to our new Christians. We have given thanks to God when we learned that he was to continue in his office for another three years. The joy has been universal and we ourselves would like His Majesty to continue him in this post for the rest of his life.

This passage is of peculiar interest for several reasons. First, it shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that the charges later brought against Marie by the Ursulines of Tours—that she was too ready to sacrifice her own interests and opinions to those of the Jesuits even in matters of principle—are manifestly false. The opinion she forms of D'Argenson is her own, determined by his own conduct and his relations with the community; she is far too candid to accept the hearsay and opinions of others

as her own. Secondly, her words indicate that she was not alone in her opinion of D'Argenson; the "universal joy" which she mentions must indicate that at least a large segment of the population found the Governor satisfactory. Perhaps, as she examined the church-state quarrel from the objectivity of her monastery and her sixty years, she was able to see that Laval himself might temper the zeal which often led to inflexibility in his conduct. "In anything that pertains to the dignity and authority of his office he will not change a single iota," she wrote to Claude, recalling sympathetically that zeal at forty can be a very inflexible thing indeed.

So far, at least, Marie had no reason for anything but personal gratitude to Laval. His poverty and charity were after her own heart and she wrote admiringly to Claude:

He is another St. Thomas of Villanova for his charity and humility; he devotes himself completely, keeping for his own use only the worst. He is an indefatigable worker—a very austere man, wholly detached from the things of this world. He gives away everything, and lives as a poor person; one can say unquestionably that he has the spirit of poverty. He will never be one to make friends in order to advance or increase his own profit, for he is dead to all that. Perhaps—although I don't want to wrong him—if he were not quite so much this way things would go better; for one can accomplish nothing here without material help. But of course I can be mistaken; everyone must take his own way in going to God. He practices this same poverty in his house, his food, his furniture, his servants. He has just a single gardener, whom he lends to the poor whenever they need him, and a house servant who takes care of Monsieur de Bernières.

On October 9, he officiated at the clothing ceremony of Jeanne Godefroy, now to be known as Sister François Xavier—possibly to honor His Excellency, for whom this was the first ceremony of its kind. He was an impressive figure as he stood in the sanctuary, clothed in surplice and his bishop's purple, and asked of this child just beginning her fifteenth year the question hallowed by tradition: "My daughter, what do you desire?" The habit which he gave her in answer to her response was really his own gift, for he himself had insisted on giving seven yards

of black serge in addition to two pieces of linen of nineteen yards each. Father Lalemant, who noted it all with his usual precision, did not neglect to add righteously, "I myself gave her ten *écus* for her tunic and white veils."⁹

His first Canadian winter was a difficult one for Laval. He continued his efforts to visit his people, making the trip to Château-Richer in February despite the heavy snows, and being rewarded with the consolation of administering the sacrament of Confirmation to more than 170 people. The following Easter he presided at a solemn Holy Communion, after which the forty communicants were invited to breakfast at Madame de la Peltrie's little house, where Laval still continued to live. He himself helped with the serving, overjoyed as always to find himself the servant of the servants. Father Lalemant, however, while admiring Laval's zeal and charity, shook his head over his sense of rubrics. After none of Laval's official functions did the Jesuit Superior have that unparalleled joy of being able to inscribe in his *Journal*, *bene fecit*. After the Christmas Mass he had noted that the Bishop had not been standing in the proper place to give the blessing; and at Easter things had not improved. Lalemant observed with almost personal grievance: "The Bishop made many mistakes."¹⁰

Laval and Lalemant were both soon to have far more distressing events on their minds than errors in rubrics, however. With the coming of spring the incursions of the Iroquois became bolder. But sporadic plundering and massacring on the part of the savages had become part of the Canadian way of life; and the inhabitants did not anticipate that the spring of 1660 would augment their ordinary peril. The year before, when Marie had received a letter from Claude indicating that the word was abroad in France that the mission was soon to be abandoned, she had replied indignantly:

You astonish me when you say that our Mothers wish to recall us. May God preserve us from such a fate! If we did not give up after our fire and all our other losses, we are surely not going to give up for the Iroquois, unless the whole country leaves or unless our superior obliges us to do so. . . . If things were really in such a dangerous state, I would be the first to advise you of it.

By mid-April, however, rumor was spreading that the savages were preparing for a full-scale attack on Montreal, after which they intended to go on to Three Rivers and finally to Quebec. These rumors were confirmed by an Iroquois captive who under torture revealed to Father Chaumonot their plan to destroy Quebec and especially to kill the Governor.

Laval had already ordered daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and a crusade of prayer to avert the danger. D'Argenson meanwhile worked feverishly to provide outposts, to help the villagers fortify their houses, to strengthen the fort against attack. The fort had little to recommend it as a place of protection. Its gates and parapets were in ruins; its ladders and ramparts, in such bad condition that they could not be used. The inventory of ammunition was no more consoling: five ancient cannon, eighty-four muskets (nine of which did not work), a barrel of powder too damp for use. It is small wonder that Laval placed more hope in prayer than in battle. The Bishop, fearful of sudden attack, canceled the canonical election of a superior which was to have been held at the Ursulines on Pentecost Thursday, and as further precaution he withdrew the Blessed Sacrament from the convents of both the Ursulines and the Hôtel Dieu. D'Argenson, having come several times to examine the monastery, decided finally that the nuns might be safer in the more centrally located Jesuit house. Thus each night at sunset the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu, together with the Ursulines, made their way through those streets which they had not traveled since their arrival in Quebec. Behind them, frightened and bewildered, trudged their boarders carrying as best they could the little stock of possessions they would need for the night. At sunrise the silent procession made its way back home to continue their ordinary daily routine. Marie herself described all this in detail when she wrote to Claude the following June:

They set up two guardhouses at the two ends of our house, and there were sentries on duty regularly. A number of outposts were stationed, the strongest of which was near our stable, to protect the barn on one side and the church on the other. All our windows were walled up halfway, reinforced with wooden beams, and furnished with loopholes. They even set up defenses on our outside steps. There were communication bridges set

up from one lodging to another, and even from our house to where our workmen slept. We could go into our courtyard only by means of a door operated on a windlass, where only one person could pass at a time. To put it briefly, our monastery was turned into a fort guarded twenty-four hours a day by very resolute men. When we received word to leave, the guard-houses were already erected.

I had permission not to leave, in order that our monastery would not be completely abandoned to soldiers and also because I had to furnish them with ammunition, for their mouths as well as for the defenses. Three other religious stayed with me. I must admit that I suffered very much when I saw that they were going to remove the Blessed Sacrament and that we were going to be left without it. One of our Sisters—Sister St. Ursule—cried bitterly over this, and could not be consoled.

When the colonists saw us leave a house as well protected as ours was . . . they were so terrified that they felt all was lost. They abandoned their houses and fled to the fort or the Bishop's house or came to stay with us, so that we had six or seven families lodged either with our domestics or in our parlors or offices. The remainder barricaded themselves in the Lower Town, where many guardhouses were erected.

Thus for eight days, while the Iroquois scare was at its height, the religious suffered their nightly exile from their convents, while Marie and a few of the more courageous stayed on to help the militia in case of attack. "Although I had no fear," Marie wrote later, "I hardly slept at all during those days. My ear kept guard all during the night . . . so that I would be always ready to give the soldiers whatever they needed in case of an attack." Yet even after the Governor had decided that they could remain in their home during the night, the danger was far from averted. The townspeople continued to come in the evening to take shelter in the rooms and corridors on the ground floor of the monastery, and a dozen huge dogs stood guard at all the entrances. Until mid-June the colonists continued to prepare for an attack which was never to come; for the Iroquois, irresolute before the speciously formidable ramparts of Quebec, finally slipped off into the forest to make other plans.

But even with this respite, the inhabitants recognized that they were enjoying only a temporary lull. "What we fear most

is famine," Marie wrote on June 25, "for if the enemy comes in the fall he destroys the harvest, and if he comes in the spring he ruins the seed." It was with this in mind that the Governor sent off a ship at once, hoping that it would get to France and back before the freeze, bringing to the isolated colonists the flour and other foodstuffs so vital to their existence.

Yet in the midst of the fear of death, Bishop Laval found himself burdened with a problem which he considered a greater evil than death itself. He had been in Quebec for less than a year, and already he had begun to realize that to exercise authority more was needed than miter and crosier. There were times when he wondered whether anyone in all of Canada—except of course the religious—had the slightest interest in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In 1660 he wrote to Pope Alexander VII:

I have not found here a single person whose zeal and authority can be counted on for the strengthening of the cause of religion. The majority have not the slightest care for the propagation of the faith and seek nothing but their own interests.¹¹

It was an extreme statement, but its hyperbole was evoked from a spirit for whom the salvation of souls was the only reason for living. "Zealous and inflexible," Marie had characterized him upon his arrival; but he was forced to admit that even his indomitable will could not sway toward God the hearts of those whom greed had conquered.

Although his first six months of administration had many problems, in his eyes the greatest was that of the unregulated sale of alcohol to the Indians. These people, always a prey to gluttony, were uncontrolled in their desire for "fire water." They would travel hundreds of miles for a single bottle, or, worse, lie or murder to obtain it. Canadian traders, always apt businessmen, soon took advantage of the savages' weaknesses; they robbed them unmercifully, using brandy as the base of their bargaining. All this was shocking enough, but what happened when the savages were drunk was beyond description. Robbery, rape, murder were in the forefront of the long catalogue of their crimes. Children were killed, houses burned to the ground, their own people—even their own families—brutally attacked. To it all, the

sobered culprit had but a single answer: "It is your fire water."

To many of the righteous citizens, the question of selling alcohol to the savages seemed like a violation of both the natural law and the Gospel. Champlain had early seen it thus and had made severe regulations prohibiting it. Governor d'Ailleboust had done his best to continue Champlain's policy; and in 1657, on the advice of his ministers, the King himself had pronounced against such sale. There were those, however, both at home and abroad, who had always managed to justify this practice in terms of utility or necessity. Many saw it as a necessary evil for the progress of the colony. They argued that it was the only way they could get a monopoly on the fur trade and draw the Indians to the French rather than the Dutch and English traders. Laval, for whom political and commercial achievement were always secondary issues, saw it only as an enormous vice which was ruining the spiritual health of the colony.

He took counsel with the Jesuits, and together they decided that the Church had the right to invoke the penalty of excommunication in this matter which involved the morals of both French and Indians. On May 6, feast of the Ascension, Laval took his place in the pulpit of the parish church and announced that anyone who sold intoxicating drink to the Indians would, *ipso facto*, be considered excommunicated.¹² It was a bold move and one which he realized would do little to increase his popularity with the commercial interests in the colony. But Laval, as Marie had once pointed out, "did not know the meaning of human respect." He had done what he thought right before God; this was the only consolation he ever asked. Marie, always heroically loyal to authority, heard with distaste and chagrin the countercharges which the Bishop's acts provoked. In annoyance she wrote to France:

The greatest loss in the country, it seems to me, is coming not so much from the Iroquois but from those people who, from envy or some other fault, are writing all sorts of falsehoods against the holiest and most virtuous people—destroying by their calumnies those who are doing their best to maintain justice.

She knew all too well what it meant to be misrepresented; and while she herself had already felt Laval's heavy hand, she would

never deviate a fraction of an inch from the loyalty she owed him as her bishop.

In April of 1660, shortly before the Iroquois scare, Laval had made his canonical visitation of the Ursuline monastery with unexpectedly thorny results. At this time Mother St. Athanase was superior and Mother de Notre Dame had been appointed to the office of mistress of novices. Laval, however, saw things differently and demanded that the office of novice mistress be considered an elected charge. Mother St. Athanase protested, since she felt that Mother de Notre Dame was giving perfect satisfaction in her work. But protests were useless, and when the election was held, Mother St. Croix replaced the former novice mistress. In a long and confidential letter to an old friend in Tours, Marie wrote:

Here is the way things happened. Our Bishop had our Reverend Mother come to the parlor, and after confirming her in her office, told her that he wanted the mistress of novices also to be in charge of the young professed, and that this office was to be determined by election. This proposal took us completely by surprise, and we disputed vigorously to hinder its execution. But he did not wish to listen to any of the reasons that we could provide. All we could obtain was the promise that the election would be for only three years—not as a precedent, but simply as a trial to show us the success of such a change. Our Reverend Mother did not let herself get troubled, for she was convinced that this good Mother would be maintained in this charge for which she was so eminently suited. But the election turned things in quite another direction, for as you know, when it is left to free choice one cannot settle the votes as one would like. Everything was undoubtedly according to God's plan and done in complete sincerity. On this score you can believe me, for I was an eyewitness to everything that happened.

This, however, was not all, for before the visitation was over, Laval had shown himself "zealous and inflexible" on another score. This was the right of the superior to open letters addressed to all members of the community. Since the Canadian Mission was a unique venture, neither Marie nor Mother St. Athanase had availed themselves of this right, since they both wished their

subjects to feel free to write and receive letters from their old friends in France with perfect liberty of spirit. Laval, however, did not see things in this light, commenting that this was not a simple right of the superior but her obligation. Some of the religious, aggrieved at this apparent lack of trust, wrote directly to Tours, complaining that from now on they would have no opportunity for any privacy in their correspondence. When the superior at Tours questioned Marie on this point, she hastened to explain that Laval never meant anything so stringent. "It must be," she wrote, "that those who wrote this detail to you have misunderstood the intention of Monseigneur, which consists simply, as I have just said, in the formality of breaking the seal; he is perfectly right, for the rule does say something that could bear this interpretation."

They were small points actually, and they were amicably settled; but by the close of the visitation, the community was well aware that their ecclesiastical superior intended to rule them as well as the rest of his flock with both rod and staff. When he returned in the spring of 1661, they knew that they had not been mistaken. Although he made no difficulty when Mother St. Croix begged to be relieved of her office of novice mistress, there were other and more vital areas on which he seemed more determined. The year before, some of the religious had apparently mentioned to him some dissatisfaction with the rule they were then following, a rule which had been prepared under the direction of Jerome Lalemant and which they had voted to accept in 1646. The feeling had grown that this rule was too detailed—as it may very well have been if the wording had been left to the punctilious Lalemant—and the Bishop had been asked whether some abridgment was not possible. Although he took no action at the time, he gave the suggestion careful thought; and when he returned the following April, he had ready at hand a revised rule. To Marie, for whom the present rule represented all that was highest and most practical, his suggestions cut deep against the grain. What he proposed, she wrote in a letter to Mother St. Catherine, now superior at Tours, was utterly contrary to the Ursuline spirit and would never be accepted unless obedience forced them to it.

Thus, the following fall she wrote at some length:

... he has acted according to his own ideas on the subject; and although he has retained the essentials, he has curtailed everything which provided an explication and facilitated its practice. Further, he has added what pleased him, so that this abridgment would be better suited for Carmelites or Religious of Calvary than for Ursulines. . . .

He has given us eight months to a year to think it over. But, my dear Mother, the matter has been already thought over and concluded: we will never accept this unless the limits of obedience force us to do so. However, we are not saying a word lest matters become worse, for we are dealing with a prelate of very eminent piety who, once he is convinced that a thing is for the glory of God, would never go back on it. Thus we would be forced to go along with this, which would be very detrimental to our observance. There is no necessity for cutting down our chant. He has left us only our Vespers and Tenebrae, which we sing as we used to when I was at Tours. As for high Mass, he wants it chanted on a single tone without taking into consideration what is done either at Paris or Tours, but simply what his own ideas suggest to be the best thing. He is afraid that we might become vain over our singing and that our vanity might be noticeable to outsiders. We no longer sing at Mass because, says he, this causes distraction to the celebrant, and besides, he has never seen it done anyplace else.

Our consolation in all this is that he has had the goodness to give us for our director Father Lalemant, who is the best friend we have, and with whom we can talk confidentially. He takes unbelievable care of us—both for our spiritual and for our material needs; and because he has such a wonderful spirit he is able to smooth over some of the blows which we would otherwise find unbearable. I know that all of this can be attributed to the zeal of our Bishop; but, as you know, my dearest Mother, in matters of rule, experience ought to outweigh all speculations. When things are going well, one should keep them as they are, since one has the assurance that they are good. In changing them, one does not know whether the result will be good or bad. I have told you all this, my dearest Mother, so that you can judge if we are the ones who want to change our Constitutions, and also to give myself some consolation in the pain which I am suffering on this subject.

When, however, the eight months given them for consultation and reflection came to an end and Mother St. Athanase delivered their answer to the Bishop, Laval was surprisingly docile in accepting their decision. The Constitutions so dear to the older members of the community were retained and continued to be observed for another twenty years, until in 1682 by common consent they were replaced by the Constitutions of the Congregation of Paris.¹³

The joys of spring were tempered by anxiety, which lay about them as thick and chilling as the mists which rose white from the St. Lawrence. No word had yet come from Le Jeune as to the success of his mission. The friction between the Bishop and the Governor had been only augmented by Laval's firm stand on the alcohol question. The threat of famine was a specter which left them no peace. "If we are driven from here, it will be because of poverty rather than the sword," Marie wrote to Claude after taking inventory of the convent's meager store of supplies. The bitter bread of fear and discord was the inhabitants' only staple food in those desolate years when all their pleas for help fell upon heedless ears.

To Marie's lot had fallen the material care of the monastery, and her ceaseless responsibility weighed heavily upon her. It was just thirty years since Mother St. Bernard had received her as a postulant at the door of the Tourangelle convent, and it was to her that she now confessed the weariness and distaste that often came close to overwhelming her:

. . . each day, almost each hour, brings its own very crucifying trials, so that if our God were not found in them they would be enough to make one lose courage completely. . . . This is a country of real suffering for religious, especially for those who are charged with the management of business affairs. . . . I keep hoping for a little rest in order to prepare myself for death. Everyone laughs at me when I talk like this, for I am looked upon as a person who loves activity—I mean that I am quick and not easily upset. But they do not see the depths of my soul, which yearns only to love above all its only good. It is for this alone that I put on a good face and follow His orders. It is not enough to do the will of God; we must do it with deep interior love and with exterior good grace.

Although "crushed with cares," as she phrases it in a letter to Claude, she continued her maternally loving letters to her priest-son, sharing with him a little of her desire for solitude, but sharing as well that deeper perception that she will love best in sacrificing what is dearest.

Let us reflect that it is precisely in these affairs that we will sanctify ourselves, you and I, for what is most perfect in His eyes is to fulfill His orders. For myself, I am strongly moved to offer myself at every moment in a spirit of sacrifice, and, forgetting myself, to let Him consume me, who finds His glory in humble souls.

"You are Love," she had once cried in a moment of vision; and as the years passed, the dimensions of this infinite love and her own response to it continued to take new shape before her. She still continued to call Him "my Love," as He had long before requested her to do; but now how different the reaches and demands of love had become. When a young Ursuline of Tours wrote to her confiding her dreams and aspirations, she was deeply moved, seeing in this young heart a little of what her own heart had been. Despite the duties which often left her not a moment during the day, she wrote a reply full of that calm wisdom that knew how to encourage and temper the extravagances of young love:

It is always a new joy for me that you belong to Him and wish to follow Him without reserve. What a wonderful thing it is to love Him, my dearest child, but to love Him in the right way—that is, by dying to yourself a thousand times a day in the spirit of sacrifice. The state to which His divine goodness has called us, you and I, gives us the means to do so—more than other states could. Thus our hearts must be more moved by the spirit of this divine Master who wishes to be absolutely and without reserve the spirit of our spirit. He is inexpressibly jealous that we should never wander from this divinely gentle control. I believe, my dearest daughter, that you are in a disposition to surrender everything to Him and to run as never before in the path of His holy love. I shall ask Him to strengthen you in this saintly disposition, because there are continual heights to stretch out to in the way of perfection whose terminus you will find only in eternity. Ask Him also that I, too, may be faithful in this path. In Him I am all yours.

"To be faithful"—all her dreams of divine union, of the salvation of souls, of martyrdom, had merged into the focus of this single desire. Her whole life had simplified itself to this. But what she prayed to be faithful to was not simply a cause, a way of life, even a path of spirituality. All this had about it a complexity which no longer accorded with the simple purity of her aspiration. She wanted now nothing but to be faithful to Love himself.

CHAPTER 19

Throughout the summer and fall of 1661 the Iroquois, emboldened by success, continued their depredations. The colonists were desperate, and yet they did not know where to turn. It had become obvious that no merely defensive warfare would ever bring a resolution between white man and red. Laval had been horrified when on his arrival he had heard talk of a war of extermination; but within the twelve months he had spent in New France, he had become, as Marie pointed out, converted not only to the practicality but to the absolute necessity of such a course. Council meetings, embassies, peace treaties had all proved worthless; and the administrators of the colony were now inclined to take quite literally Champlain's shrewd caution: never trust an Indian without very good reason. Marie, writing to Claude in the fall, observed:

I don't doubt that you have been upset about us because of the bad news of the Iroquois persecution which reached France last year. This year they have been worse than in any of the preceding years, having killed or taken captive more than a hundred Frenchmen between Montreal, where they began their ravages, and the Cap de Tourmente, which is the last of the French habitations.

Even the hardiest of the colonists recognized that they could not hold out much longer unless help was sent from France; and once again they sent an embassy to the King, including in its number the Governor of Three Rivers, Pierre Boucher, who had already made something of a name for himself as a farmer, soldier, and administrator. Meanwhile, the colonists could but pray that the Iroquois would not attack during the winter, for then they would be trapped beyond hope. With the frozen St. Lawrence before them and the forest behind, all chance of

escape would be cut off. In answer to Claude's question concerning the possibility of flight, Marie commented: "Where could we fly to? Into the woods, where we would soon be lost and where the Indians know every nook and cranny?"

Paul Ragueneau, then Jesuit Superior, was aware of the precarious state of Canada and wrote to the Prince de Condé warning him to expect a full-scale tragedy unless soldiers were sent from France: "A regiment maintained here for two or three years would put an end to all our fear, but nothing less will do. I say 'maintained,' for this country can in no way bear this expense, or even the least part of it."¹

Paralleled with these external dangers was the increasing discord between civil and ecclesiastical authority. What had begun as occasional incidents in this area of protocol were soon raised to the dimensions of a full-scale war between church and state. Although neither Governor nor Bishop was of a petty nature, yet both were susceptible of anything that might be translated as a slight to their official positions. D'Argenson, who had once envisioned Laval bending before the power of the state, recognized now that the imperious mien which the Bishop managed to suggest in even his humblest tasks bespoke the inflexibility of the House of Montmorency-Laval. In the end it was D'Argenson who yielded, weary before the struggle which presented itself on so many fronts. Whatever might be said about his imprudence, he was sincerely concerned about the fate of Canada; and it was his helplessness before those perils which he was incapable of averting which caused him at last to resign his post. It was with deep regret that Marie announced to Claude that the Governor was about to return to France—a regret deepened by her awareness of what he had suffered in his official position:

... The Viscount d'Argenson has left us, not being able to stay on any longer because of his poor health. In addition to this I can tell you confidentially that he has suffered very much in this country, for which he has had the responsibility without being able to get the help he needed from France. Thus he saw himself powerless to resist the Iroquois, fearing to take any of the garrison of Quebec lest the enemy seize the fort; this upset him greatly and contributed very much to his ill health. He has come across a few unappreciative souls

who murmur against his way of doing things and complain loudly in a way that would deeply wound a man of his caliber and merit. He has endured all of this very generously. Nevertheless, his inability to rescue the country, the shortcomings of certain counselors to whom he had confided certain confidential matters, the little understanding that he had with the most important men in the country, and finally his ill health which was becoming habitual, led him to procure peace by retreating. . . . For ourselves, we are losing much in losing Monsieur d'Argenson, for he has been most charitable toward us and has never lost an opportunity to do us a service. He has often conferred on me the honor of a visit on your behalf. Thus, since our obligation is a mutual one, I beg you to join your gratitude to mine.

On August 31, 1661, arrived His Majesty's newly appointed Governor for New France: Pierre Dubois, Baron d'Avaugour, who, commented one of his critics, was more used to the sword than the pen. Canada was, it is true, his first diplomatic appointment after forty years of loyal and courageous military service. From the beginning it was obvious that he would be no more tractable to the powers of the Church than his predecessor had been. Although upon his arrival he went to the parish church for Mass and then to the Jesuit refectory where he met the Fathers, he refused to accept Laval's invitation to attend the welcome that had been planned in his honor, indicating that he was a man little given to ceremony. He insisted on visiting the full extent of his new domain and returned to Quebec shocked at the inadequacy of Canada's fortifications. Far from laying the blame upon the former Governor, he acknowledged publicly that he did not know how D'Argenson had been able to manage as well as he had with the dearth of men and weapons at his command.

No sooner, however, had the Baron assumed his official role, than he was forced to concede that commanding an army was less difficult than dealing with the fortuitous events which pushed upon him without warning or design. In September the whole colony was struck with a mortal disease, a violent species of whooping cough, which led to pleurisy accompanied by high fever. Since it was highly contagious, it spread rapidly throughout both French and Indian families, killing especially the French children, who seemed to have no resistance to it. "We

have all been attacked by it," Marie wrote to Claude; "our boarders, our help have all been at death's door. I don't think there are twenty people in all of Canada who have been exempt from it."

Added to this mortal sickness were the strange signs and portents in the sky: comets with strange tails pointed toward the earth, a fiery canoe, the shape of a man enveloped in flames. On the Ile d'Orléans, it was reported that a bloodcurdling cry was heard, and a voice seemed to thunder from the heavens. To the superstitious minds of both French and Indians, all these were "fatal omens," as Marie called them, of terrible things to come. No wonder that the "old soldier," now the Governor, felt uneasy as from the ramparts of Fort St. Louis he watched the leaden sky of winter close over Quebec.

Actually, despite the atmosphere of terror in which it began, the winter passed quietly. Christmas came and went without incident, so that Father Lalemant had little to record in his *Journal* except that as their Christmas present he had given to each of the Fathers a half-dozen pieces of citron rind which had come on the last boat.²

The following Christmas, Lalemant was forced to record a far less edifying episode as an explanation for why the Jesuit choir, prepared so carefully, gave such little satisfaction at the Christmas ceremonies. Sadly he wrote on the following day:

There was some disorder in connection with the drink given to the singers and children of our seminary. In addition to their usual beer, I had a pot of wine given to them on the eve; and, on the day itself, the churchwardens also gave them some without our knowing it. This made Amador so hoarse that he could not sing any more on the feast; the same thing happened to the other musicians.³

Yet these trifling difficulties palled before the continued friction between the powers of church and state. By early summer of 1662, relations between the Governor and the Vicar Apostolic were at a point of crisis. The old quarrels of precedence had been so bitterly renewed that on the feast of Candlemas D'Avau-gour refused to attend the ceremonies at the parish church but instead presented himself at the Ursulines, where he could be sure of being the first to receive a candle. It was an extremely awkward

situation for the religious, who feared that their hospitality to the Governor might indicate a lack of loyalty to their bishop. Yet they could hardly do other than present a cordial welcome to D'Avaugour and hope that Laval would not misconstrue their action.

The real issue between the two leaders, however, was not mere protocol but the more extensive problem of the alcohol trade. Upon his arrival the Governor had acquiesced perfectly with Laval's opinions, and their concerted effort to stem this abuse had been so successful that in the preceding November Laval had felt free to suspend the sentence of excommunication. Soon, however, D'Avaugour showed himself unwilling to invoke the heavy penal sentences which had been agreed upon. When Lalemant presented himself at the Governor's house to intercede for a poor Frenchwoman who had been caught in this illegal trade, D'Avaugour in a moment of bad temper, not unusual with him, announced that if this woman were not to be penalized then neither would he invoke the law against anyone else concerned. Thus Laval was left with no other course but that of invoking once more the sentence of excommunication. It was, he recognized, an impotent gesture, for no thunderous denunciation from the pulpit could outweigh the fact that the gleeful venders knew that no penal judgment would be brought against them.

This time Marie was solidly behind the policy of Laval and indicated, at least obliquely, that she felt that the Governor was seriously failing in his duty to the colony. An entire letter to Claude is devoted to this grave problem which was destroying not only the moral fiber of the Christians but their very existence as well:

In this country there are some Frenchmen so wretched and godless that they are causing the loss of all of our new Christians by selling them brandy in exchange for beaver pelts. This drink is the undoing of these poor people—men and women, boys and girls alike. . . . Night and day they run about naked with swords and other weapons, putting everyone to flight. . . . In their wake follow murders, rape, horrible and unprecedented brutalities. The Fathers have done their best to stop this evil on the part of both the French and the savages, but all their

efforts have been in vain. . . . An Algonquin captain, an excellent Christian and one of the first to be baptized in Canada, complained to us when he paid us a visit: "Ononthio—that is, the Governor—is killing us by letting them sell us this drink." We answered, "Ask him to stop." "I have already asked him twice," he replied, "but he has not done anything; but if you ask him yourself, perhaps he will listen to you."

It is deplorable to watch the tragic results of this trade. Our prelate has done all he possibly could to stop its course, since it tends so directly to the destruction of faith and religion. He has used all his ordinary persuasion to deflect the French from a trade which is so contrary to the glory of God and the salvation of the savages. They have scorned his remonstrances because they are backed by a strong secular power, and have told him that this liquor is permitted everywhere. They were told in reply that in a new Church and amid uncivilized people it should not be, since experience has shown that it is detrimental to the propagation of the faith and the good morals which should be expected in new converts. This reasoning has been no more successful than his persuasion had been. There have been other major arguments on this subject. Finally our prelate's zeal for the glory of God has led him to excommunicate those who engage in this trade. Even this thunderbolt has not shaken them, since they refuse to give any account of this matter, maintaining that the Church has no right to interfere in matters of this kind.

Laval, adamant in the rightness of his cause, realized that his authority must be backed by that of the secular power if any lasting stand were to be taken on this issue. It was primarily with this in mind that he prepared to leave for France, embarking from Quebec on August 12 in the company of Paul Rague-neau. D'Avaugour, aware that his course of action had been at best questionable, became increasingly anxious as he speculated on what might be said and done on the other side of the Atlantic. Four days after Laval's departure, the Governor sent his secretary, Péronne de Mazé, to present his side of the argument to Louis XIV and his councilors. It would be close to a year, however, before Quebec would learn the result of these negotiations. When Laval did return, it was to find a city chastened by terror and suffering.

The ordinary excesses of the pre-Lenten carnival were already

under way when, on the evening of Monday, February 5, chaos fell upon Quebec. The first hint the colonists had of disaster came at about 5:30 when they heard in the distance a strange buzzing sound, like, as Marie wrote later, "a great number of carriages driving at top speed over the pavement." Within minutes the noise grew nearer until it seemed that the frightful roaring of waves was all about them. Thick clouds of dust filled the air while the roofs and gables were struck with flying stones. "Doors opened of themselves," Marie continued, "while others which were open slammed shut." All the church bells of the city rang madly in the twilight as the steeples swayed and threatened to fall. Trees were bent double or uprooted while inside the houses the furniture pitched crazily from side to side, walls cracked, and huge fissures appeared in the ceilings. Meanwhile the terrified screams of the horses and the lowing of the panic-stricken cattle pierced above the noise of the storm. Through it all the townsfolk ran in aimless terror, some running out of their houses and others running back in, looking for shelter. The earth shook beneath their feet; heavy stones, catapulted out of the earth, fell thickly about them as, crazed by darkness and terror, they ran and stumbled through the streets. It was, Marie recalled, "like a city on the eve of the Judgment." And indeed it seemed that God's judgment had fallen upon them. His arm would not be shortened, the Scripture said, and now that arm was extended over them in chastisement. This was the answer to their greed and calumny, and they recognized that it was just. "Be merciful, O Lord, because we have sinned before Thee," they cried as they fought their way through the clouds of dust, leaping wildly to escape the giant crevasses which opened before them. In the confusion no one knew what had happened. Some cried "Fire!" while others ran to seize their guns, thinking that they were being attacked by an army of Iroquois. The earth pulsed in giant waves beneath their feet; and no matter what they tried to cling to, it was soon wrenched out of their grasp. Finally, shaken and exhausted, they made their way to the church, hoping to have the opportunity to confess before they died. "It was a stroke of God's mercy for the entire country," Marie remarked as she heard of the hordes that sought absolution in the confessional.

By six o'clock the first quake had spent itself, and the inhabitants began to breathe once again. But the respite was not for long; by eight o'clock another quake had set the town atremble. Recalling that endless night, Marie wrote to Claude the following autumn:

. . . eight o'clock that evening it recommenced, and in a single hour it was repeated twice. We said Matins in choir, reciting it partly on our knees in a spirit of humility and abandoning ourselves to the supreme power of God. There were twenty-two repetitions that night, so I am told by someone who counted them. I counted only six, for some of them were so light as to be almost imperceptible. But about three o'clock there was a very violent quake which lasted for a long time.

Meanwhile, the surrounding country was also in the shock of earthquake. The church at Beaupré trembled as though it were made of cardboard; Indian houses disappeared into the earth or were submerged in lakes which sprang suddenly into existence. As far off as Tadoussac the violence of the quakes threw the country into torment. At Tadoussac itself the movement of the earth was especially violent and set off conflagrations which continued to smolder long after the quakes themselves had ended.

The morning of February 6 dawned at last, and the populace of Quebec discovered with some surprise that they had survived the night. Even more incredible was the fact that no one had been killed or even badly injured. Throughout the next month, however, the quakes continued, although less frequently and with diminished force. For seven months Quebec was to know the insecurity of having the solid ground seem to melt beneath its feet; but the wild terror of that first night was never repeated.

As the weeks passed and the inhabitants made their way beyond the walls of the city, they were astonished at the changes that had been wrought in the contour of the land. Marie gleaned little by little what had happened in the surrounding country, so that she could write later to Claude:

. . . we began to discover what the ordinary effects of violent earthquakes are: numbers of cavities in the earth, new springs and hills where there were none before, the earth leveled where

there used to be mountains, new caverns in some places exuding fiery fumes; there were other places left perfectly bare which had been covered with woods and thickets. Boulders were overturned, earth was disturbed, forests destroyed, trees partially knocked down and sunk into the earth right up to the top. Two rivers completely disappeared, and two new springs were discovered—one white as milk and the other red as blood. But nothing has amazed us more than to see the St. Lawrence which, because of its great depth, never changes—neither with the snow, which ordinarily changes a river, nor with the juncture of more than five rivers emptying into it as well as six hundred large springs—to see this river, I repeat, change and assume a mustard color which it retained for eight days.

It was actually less the changes in the world about her than in the people which drew Marie's deepest admiration and gratitude. The savages, terrified of the prospect of a death so sudden and inescapable, bowed in increasing numbers before the words of the missionaries, who promised them a world of happiness beyond the grave if they submitted to the saving waters of baptism. Even more rewarding were the numbers of Frenchmen who, forsaking their evil and worldly lives, made their peace with the Church of God. The remaining days of the carnival became days of penance and sorrow, devoted to public prayers and continual processions and pilgrimages. The confessionals were never empty, and the curé of Château-Richer alone counted that he had heard more than eight hundred general confessions. Some of the conversions were as violent as the quakes themselves. Marie described with apparent relish the case of an old soldier stationed at Fort St. François Xavier near Sillery who, when the earthquakes began, was sure that it was he whom God was after. Apparently he had fairly good reasons for thinking so, for Marie describes him as "the most wicked man in the world." But if his sins were on a large scale, so was his spirit of penitence. In uncontrolled terror he fell on his knees in the public square, bellowing the lurid accounts of his misadventures in grace for the startled populace to hear. It took four husky men to carry him off to the nearest confessional, for he was so paralyzed by fear that his legs would not hold him.

Marie's own spiritual posture before these terrifying events was

to use them as she had long learned to use everything—to strengthen her faith in the merciful Providence of her God. She numbered herself truly among those sinners who were called by these extraordinary means to a spirit of penance and an interior conversion. With each successive year she saw more penetratingly into the depths of her own selfishness and impurity, acknowledging that it was God himself who must purify her, since she was powerless to accomplish her own salvation. It is from the fullness of this interior realization that she wrote to Claude:

Do not be astonished if you see imperfections in your actions; this is that state of union where the spirit of God calls you in order to open your eyes. The more this Spirit gives you light, the more you will see your own impurities.

Claude, who at this period had just been confirmed in his charge as prior of the Abbey of St. Serge in Angers, also suffered from a multiplicity of business affairs. But that the exterior work, which he often confessed he found so distasteful, could itself be the purifying instrument by which he would be prepared for divine union, was a point which he did not easily grasp. Although Marie had often spent many pages of her letters in elaborating precisely this point for him, her maternal love was never too tired to try again. While it is hard not to feel a certain impatience with Claude's slow and ponderous understanding of Marie's delicate spiritual insights, there are times when one realizes that it is precisely this quality of mind to which we are indebted. This is the stimulus which evokes from his mother some of the clearest and most revealing passages describing her own spiritual depths. It was in an effort to indicate to him the union of action and contemplation that she had written to him in an earlier letter: "I think God wants me to be one of those birds who take their nourishment while flying." It is this, perhaps, which is the most essential characteristic of her missionary life. She learned amid the unceasing toil to which God destined her that there is a mode of apprehending God as true and as actual as any involved in the conventional mystic experience. She found Him where He was to be found; and she discovered that He was everywhere. It is this recognition of another dimension of mystic union which she tried to reveal to Claude when she wrote:

Be careful not to go too fast. When He wants you not to lose sight of Him, despite your exterior duties, He will take care of it Himself. Further, when His spirit has become completely master of yours, possessing the very core of your being to keep you in a real and intimate union with His Divine Majesty by a glance of love, all your duties will not be able to distract you from this divine communication. . . . You are perfectly right in saying that your perfection consists in doing the will of God. You will always be harassed by the business which is relevant to your state of life; but in this He will give you the grace of actual union with Him provided you remain faithful. His Holy Spirit will bestow upon you the gift of counsel for everything that He will commit to your care, so that you will be able to desire nothing except what He causes you to desire, and to do nothing except what He causes you to do. This is what His Spirit is calling you to and what you will finally attain according to the measure of your fidelity.

Her ability to find God amid the toil of external affairs was to stand her in good stead, for the following October she informed Claude that once again she had been elected to the superiority of the monastery. "It is a heavy and difficult burden to carry, especially in a country like this," she wrote, adding, "but there is no point in saying anything more; the most perfect thing is to keep silent, submitting to the designs of God and those who hold His place."

This was not the only change of government in Quebec that year, for no sooner had the trembling of the earth ceased and ordinary life resumed than Governor d'Avaugour announced his return to France.

Meanwhile, the city awaited the return of its Vicar Apostolic and its new Governor. Saffray de Mézy was a hand-picked choice, for the King was determined to provide Laval with an administrator to his taste. Perhaps the chief bond between Laval and his new Governor was that they had both been friends and disciples of De Bernières. De Mézy in particular felt that he owed his salvation to the apostle of Caen who had drawn him from a wild and dissolute youth into the spiritual climate of his Hermitage.⁴ When Governor and Bishop arrived at Quebec on September 15, 1663, optimism ran high. During Laval's absence a permanent episcopal residence had been built by his Vicar, where

he was to live with his priests and those candidates to be trained for the ministry.

Laval's year in France had been used to marked advantage: he had received permission to set up a seminary; he had been encouraged to make his own choice for Governor; he had learned that, despite the discord between church and state, Louis had been sufficiently pleased with his work to suggest to Rome that he be given the official title of Bishop of Quebec: His account of the mismanagement of the Company of the Hundred Associates had been incriminating enough to cause the King to dissolve the Company entirely and take New France into his own personal power as a crown colony. The jurisdiction and permanency of the Sovereign Council was reaffirmed, with Bishop and Governor sharing joint power. Laval's right to exact tithes was confirmed; and, perhaps most important of all, the King had placed an absolute and definite prohibition on the sale of alcoholic beverages to the Indians. A spirit of optimism was in the air despite the fact that in place of the soldiers the colonists had hoped for, they received instead a hundred families, whose initial expenses in the new country were to be defrayed by a royal grant.

As usual, Marie wrote a full account of all these changes to Claude, but despite the catalogue of improvements which she relates, her letter ended on a chary note. Whether her native buoyancy had been deflated by experience or whether she was shrewd enough to realize that granting equal authority to two such strong-willed characters as Laval and De Mézy would never work in the practical order, it is difficult to determine. It is, however, on a tone close to skepticism that she concludes:

... all this sounds fine and it is starting out very well, but only God sees how it will end. Experience has made us realize that success is often very different from the ideas that one has conceived of it.

In actual fact Marie's skepticism was well founded, for the Sovereign Council, with its joint authority vested in church and state, soon became a divisive force. Despite his initial docility, De Mézy proved as intractable as his predecessors. At first he hedged and then openly refused to implement the regulation prohibiting the sale of alcohol. In addition, when the colonists complained of

Laval's levying Church tithes, he assumed an attitude that said clearly enough that he too considered the legislation arbitrary and unjust. Further, the Governor made it quite clear that, despite the wording of royal statutes, he intended to exercise alone the right of selecting his councilors. Laval's biographer could comment all too truly, "The friend of his heart soon became his bitterest enemy."

If De Mézy knew Laval at all, he must have known that he would not give way easily before this pressure of the civic power. The stern features grew a little more set, the lines about his mouth deepened, the jutting chin took on new prominence as Laval recalled with pride that no member of the house of Montmorency-Laval had ever asked for quarter. De Mézy, despite his bravado, was not entirely unshaken by Laval's resolute attitude. Throughout the winter and into the following spring, the Governor continued to teeter between arrogance and subservience. He summarily dismissed the Council only to reconvene it when the threat of Laval's influence at court rose before him. The councilors were, for the most part, men who had already proved their fidelity to the Bishop, and although De Mézy could diminish their legislative power, he could not fail to see that, despite his threats and arbitrary actions, they formed a frighteningly solid phalanx behind Laval.

None of the councilors had suffered more during these events than Jean Bourdon, whose invincible loyalty to Laval had made him a target of particular hatred for the Governor. More for Laval's sake than for his own, he had fought to retain his place on the Council, suffering the indignity of having his integrity questioned and his honor impugned. De Mézy, unable to vanquish this intransigent pioneer, finally ordered him banished to the mother country. Against such a stand both Laval and Bourdon were powerless; and in the fall of 1664, accompanied by his elder son, he made plans for his departure. Before he left, however, he made his way to the monastery on the hill to say good-by to his two daughters, Anne and Genevieve. These two girls, now Mother St. Joseph and Mother St. Agnes, had suffered much as they watched their father go through those long months of disgrace. They found their consolation in the thought that, whatever people might accuse him of, there could never be question of his

loyalty to the Church and the cause of Christ. Having given four of his children to the service of God, he found that, in return, God had deepened his own spiritual life.

A bond of friendship had formed between him and Marie, whose advice and encouragement had often strengthened his flagging resolution. Some years later Marie wrote an evaluation of this good friend to Claude:

Monsieur Bourdon was procurator for the King, a charge given to him because of his integrity and ability. We had a very close spiritual union because beneath his secular garb he leads a very spiritual life. He enjoys the continual presence of God and union with the Divine Majesty. One time at least he risked his life in order to make some arrangements with the Dutch concerning our French captives. In his charity he is completely dedicated to the public weal. He is the father of the poor, the consoler of widows and orphans, and an example to everyone. Ever since he established himself in this country he has given himself to every kind of good work. He has four daughters in the service of God, and in his generosity has endured this loss with piety and tranquillity. Two of these were Hospital nuns—although one of them is now dead; the two oldest are Ursulines in our monastery and very good religious.

When, therefore, on the morning of October 29, the Bishop of Petraea and Vicar Apostolic of Canada rose in the pulpit of the parish church, the congregation realized from the first sentence that it was not a Gospel homily that they were about to hear. Contemporary accounts indicate that Laval was more the practical administrator than the orator, but that day his voice filled the church like thunder. It was not rhetoric that his congregation heard that morning, but a whole-souled denunciation of a policy in which truth and justice and the cause of Christ had been subjugated to civil power. But hardly had the congregation returned to their homes than De Mézy arranged a dramatic representation of his own position. Through the streets in solemn procession came the Governor's heralds; the ominous and compelling beat of the drum won the colonists' attention while the herald read the official defense which De Mézy had prepared. This was not all that was announced, however, for Father Lale-

mant recorded in his *Journal* that the apologia also contained "insults against Monseigneur the Bishop and others."⁵

The drumbeats carried across the Atlantic; and Louis, at his wits' end, signed a document for the recall of De Mézy.

Meanwhile, the work of education continued to flourish, and Marie, busier than ever, wrote to the superior of the Ursuline convent at Mons that she was using as secretary for some of her less personal letters a young professed "from one of the principal families of the country"—very likely either Mother St. Joseph or Mother St. Agnes Bourdon. From Claude she asks pardon for the disorganization of her thoughts, commenting, "I am interrupted every minute."

The decreased number of Indian pupils had been more than balanced by the increased number of French pupils. From the beginning it had been a commonplace that everything grew well in New France, even children. And in 1662 Marie had written:

It is remarkable to see the huge number of beautiful and well-formed children, without a single physical deformity unless they have suffered an accident. A poor man will have eight or more children who during the winter go barefooted and bareheaded, with nothing but a little shift on their back, living on eels and a little bread—yet with all of this they are big and fat.

Although they were beautiful and well-formed children, Marie was often aghast at their wilderness manners. If the Ursulines were not here to teach them, she commented to a nun at Tours, "they would be as wild as the savages themselves, and perhaps even more so. There is hardly one who does not pass through our hands, and this has a reforming effect on the whole colony."

Although the nuns had admitted that they had no hope for native Indian vocations, they still continued their Indian school. Of all the Indians they had served in their twenty-five years in Canada, none had caused them more amusement or edification than Genevieve, who came to them in 1664. Genevieve was an elderly widow from a distant Algonquin tribe. After the loss of both her husband and her children, she found herself strangely attracted to the God preached by the Black Robes, and journeyed alone the 1200 miles to Quebec to receive the instruction that would not only permit her to be a Christian, but that would en-

able her to teach others of her race. Even when she learned that the Ursuline boarding school was only for young girls, she refused to be worsted and prevailed upon an important but anonymous Frenchman to importune in her behalf. The Ursulines were forced to concur, and Genevieve became a permanent member of the family. But Genevieve was more than they bargained for. Determined to achieve to the fullest her purpose in traveling those 1200 difficult miles, she demanded instruction both day and night. She recited rosary after rosary aloud in the chapel while the nuns tried to say their own prayers; she came to recreations, padding quietly in her moccasined feet; she followed Marie to her cell—always asking the same thing: tell me more about your God. Marie, amused and chagrined, was impressed as well, and wrote Claude: "In all the twenty-five years we have been in this country, we have never seen a savage as fervent as this one." Having observed the Lenten fast in its full vigor, she begged at the end for the privilege of Confirmation. Having received it, she wanted nothing but to go among her own people to share with them the mystery of salvation. When she left for Three Rivers, the nuns found the house very quiet and a little lonely without the ubiquitous Genevieve.

Shortly after the departure of Genevieve, Marie was again taken with a critical illness. Sometime before, in a dream, she had seen Christ painfully attached to His cross. She had, she wrote later to Claude, the feeling that he was looking for someone to help Him in His sufferings, and she, full of compassion at the sight of His wounds, stayed with Him as best she could. A short time later, she was suddenly stricken with an illness which she immediately associated with her vision of the Crucified. "He prepared me . . . in such a loving way that I was not taken unawares," she explained to her son.

The nature of her sickness was much the same as that which had attacked her shortly after her arrival in Canada. A liver complaint led to an effusion of bile which her body could not take care of. Her fever was dangerously high and the pain intense, "so that if God had not sustained me, I would have lost patience and cried out in my agony," she wrote. No sooner did she seem to be recovering a little, than she was attacked by severe pleurisy and renal colic. The latter caused her untold suffering, for she could

not find a single posture which provided any relief. It was pure agony either to sit or lie down. The doctors gave little hope for her recovery and the Last Sacraments were administered. Father Lalemant was often at her side, doing all that he could to strengthen and console. Bishop Laval, too, came frequently, giving her his blessing and begging her to ask God to spare her life. With her usual candor, she shook her head, explaining that she could ask for neither life nor death but only that God's most holy will be accomplished. The Bishop understood and did not press her again.

Little by little, however, her fever dropped, her pain became less intense, and she found herself regaining her strength. Soon she was out of bed, but even her indomitable will was amazed at how weak her sickness had left her. Months later the liver infection still continued, giving her a great distaste for food and leaving her abnormally fatigued. "But," as she wrote to Claude the following summer, "all this is like a bed of roses after what I have been through." She found that she was not able to rise at four with the rest of the community, and in her weakness she was forced to use a cane as she walked about the monastery.

For the first time, she felt old; and when her birthday came that October, she recognized the full weight of her sixty-five years. In August she had written to Claude:

Our Lord, who has given me back my health, alone knows how long it will last. At present I am very much better than I was, so that I can assist at all the spiritual exercises. I am still very weak, but I am in good spirits. I manage to surmount my little difficulties without feeling any the worse for it; as a matter of fact, I find that little efforts help me to recover my strength.

The days when she had longed to die so that she might enjoy full, divine union had long since gone. She was ready now, as she wrote later to Claude, to live until the end of the world if such a course would contribute to God's glory. Yet in her heart she felt that this winter would be her last. She could have had no inkling as she learned heavily on her little stick, pausing for breath between the chapel and the refectory, that seven years of apostolic activity still lay before her.

CHAPTER 20

At the same time that Marie lay so grievously ill, Saffray de Mézy was also at death's door. Not long after, during the night of May 6, the eighth Governor of Canada, repentant before the fear of death, died in the Bishop's arms. With the death of De Mézy, five years of discord came to an end. Throughout the following summer, Quebec saw the implementation of those plans which the King had begun to formulate during Laval's visit to France in 1663. Louis recognized, as did Laval himself, the need for a stronger but less arbitrary civil power than had formerly existed in New France. Toward that end he appointed not only a Governor but also an intendant—a name bestowed by Richelieu on the direct agents of the central government empowered with supreme command over any other functionary. Further, in order to insure that his new order would begin on the right foot, he sent as his lieutenant general, Alexandre de Prouville, Marquis de Tracy, who would act as his immediate viceroy.

On June 30, two ships bearing De Tracy and his entourage dropped anchor in Quebec. The five hundred inhabitants, who more than fifty years after its founding were all the city could boast of, gathered on the wharves and the ramparts of the Upper Town to welcome the King's emissary. What they saw turned them silent with awe. Their years of pioneer life had dimmed the memories of the pageantry with which royalty was embellished in the mother country. Out of the shallop and onto the wharf stepped the Marquis de Tracy, "the biggest man I have ever seen," as Marie wrote later. His majestic height was accentuated by his gaunt and sallow appearance, visible signs of the fever-stricken months spent in the West Indies on the King's business, where, Marie noted, "he accomplished marvels, subjugating everyone in obedience to the King." After him stepped gingerly the members

of his immediate company, deathly sick and weary from their stormy voyage but determined to give Quebec its royal pageant. To the Lieutenant General's side stepped the Chevalier de Chamont, his constant attendant, and behind them formed the procession of young nobles, impressive in their satins and brocades and made six inches taller than their actual height by their leonine wigs. The Indians, to whom the art of coiffeur was of passionate interest, stared unbelievably at the mass of curls which fell to the shoulders of the paleface warriors. Never in their lives had they seen so much hair!

In the Upper Town, Laval in his pontifical vestments waited before his cathedral, anxious to see this man who was to wield supreme power in New France. If the elegance of his entourage and the dignity of his bearing led Laval to realize that he had met his match, the viceroy's pious humility before the Vicar Apostolic indicated that in matters spiritual he would be a submissive son of the Church. Waving aside the *prie-dieu* and cushion which Laval had provided, De Tracy knelt on the bare floor of the parish church with unaffected devotion. He had not been long in Quebec before Marie could write to Claude: "It is most edifying to see Monsieur de Tracy's scrupulous exactitude in being always the first at religious ceremonies. He never misses a minute of them. He has been seen in church for six hours at a time. . . . He is a man of very profound piety; and his whole house, both soldiers and officers, follow his example." But for all his piety, De Tracy was determined to maintain himself in fitting pomp. Although he spent himself unstintingly for the good of his colony, he never descended to its pioneer ways. The annalist of the Hôtel Dieu noted with amazement that he never went abroad without being preceded by twenty-four guards in the King's livery and followed by six valets and four pages.

Quebec had never known so exciting a summer. On September 12 arrived Daniel Rémy de Courcelle, recently named Governor, and the King's intendant, Jean Talon. Their arrival, however, was not an unmixed joy; for when the ships docked at Quebec after 117 days on the sea, a large number of the passengers were desperately ill. Twenty of them had already died, and over 130 had to be hospitalized. Strangely enough they had managed to survive the crossing quite well, but they were suddenly stricken as the

ship approached Tadoussac. Marie, so often a progressive, shows herself a woman of her time in explaining what she thinks is the source of the sickness: "They opened the portholes too soon and let the bad air in," she comments and continues to describe the ravages of the disease after the passengers had been removed at Quebec. All the available space at the Hôtel Dieu was used; the chapel itself was turned into a ward for the sick. Even so, the dying were still uncared for; and the nuns asked permission to use the neighboring houses until the epidemic died down.

Meanwhile, boatloads of soldiers continued to arrive in Quebec. The petitions with which France had been besieged for over fifteen years had borne fruit at last as twelve hundred seasoned soldiers disembarked for active duty. With such an influx, the face of the city must inevitably change—and perhaps not entirely for the better, thought some of the older inhabitants, who did not always find the military population an unalloyed blessing. "Cockle among the wheat," they remarked and perhaps with good cause, since the Carignan-Salières regiment had not been picked for Canadian service on a purely voluntary basis. However, although occasional violence increased during the months which followed the arrival of the troops, Laval's biographer noted that the Vicar Apostolic was able to take advantage of the "good dispositions of the soldiers" to confer the sacrament of confirmation seven times between July 25 and October 6.¹ Marie herself seemed to find no lack of Christian piety among the troops, who kept the nuns busy providing a sufficient quantity of scapulars:

As for the rest of the army, they are determined to distinguish themselves by their faith and courage. They have been brought to understand that this is a holy war where they will fight only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; in order to arouse them, they have been inspired with real sentiments of piety and devotion. In this respect, the Fathers accomplish wonders. There are well over five hundred soldiers who have begun to wear the scapular of the Blessed Virgin. It is we who make these, and we are very happy to do it.

De Tracy had no intention of leaving his troops sufficient time to get into trouble. On August 21, only two days after the arrival of the last group, accompanied by their colonel, Henri Salières, the Lieutenant General ordered a formal review. Two groups of

soldiers he ordered to proceed at once westward to Lake Champlain to construct two forts at points which were later known as Sorel and Chambly after their respective commanders. De Tracy's "holy war" was about to begin.

The troops had not been the only symbol of Louis' growing spirit of paternalism toward that settlement which had come so close to perishing from neglect. On July 16, there had arrived from Le Havre the King's ship, loaded from stem to stern with royal beneficence. Among the gifts of his bounty were a number of horses—the first Canada had seen since its citizens had presented to Governor de Montmagny in 1647 a poor shaggy-footed beast who, unable to find a mate, perished without progeny, leaving Canadian farmers to perform by hand what horses could have done with one tenth the effort. At one point a hardy Frenchman devised a scheme to domesticate the moose, who seemed to have the required strength and endurance. The scheme was an abortive one, however, for the moose showed a dangerous aversion to becoming an instrument of civilization. Consequently, when the first broad-chested dray horses stumbled dazedly into the sunlight of the quay, a great cheer rose from the inhabitants as they mentally calculated the amount of land that could be cleared and furrows dug and planted with these great comfortable beasts of the homeland to assume the burden of the work.

But the loudest and longest cheer of all was reserved for the ship which docked on October 2, for here the royal bounty had outdone itself. The record given in the *Jesuit Journal* is amusing in its laconic objectivity: "A ship from Normandy arrived with eighty-two young girls and women; fifty of them are from an orphanage in Paris, where they have been very well instructed."² Thus began the institution known as "The King's Girls"—an institution variously evaluated by the population of Quebec. Louis, in his determination to build up the population of Canada, hoped to coerce some of the soldiers and artisans who had gone out on a temporary basis in 1665 to remain as permanent colonists. What better inducement than to provide them with suitable wives? It was considered a duty in that society for every girl to be married by fifteen and every boy by twenty. In an effort to encourage marriages, announcements were made before the arrival of the King's Girls that bachelors would have their hunting licenses can-

ceded unless they chose a partner within fifteen days after the arrival of the ship. It was not a subtle device; but it was eminently practical, for no young bachelor could afford to forfeit his right to hunt. While there are stories that some of the young blood, terrified of what might be in store for them, took to the forests to live among the Indians until the marrying fever had abated, most of the unmarried settlers seemed delighted with the prospect of being able to choose a suitable partner from among so many. The girls, on the other hand, reserved the right to refuse any suitor who was not to their taste, although the fear of being left may very well have made them accept what might not have seemed an ideal mate.

The one question which seemed to determine the suitability of the match was whether the man had his own farm. These girls who, for the most part, had known the loneliness and penury of charity homes looked less for handsome features than for well-stocked larders. Louis Lahontan, too much the man of the world to adopt an attitude other than cynical, does, however, provide an amusing account of some of the details of this early marriage bureau:

There was wherewith to content the most fantastical . . . for here were to be seen the tall and the short, the blond and the brown, the plump and the lean; everybody, in short, found a shoe to fit him. At the end of a fortnight not one was left. . . . Those who wanted a wife applied to the directresses, to whom they were obliged to make known their possessions and means of livelihood before taking from one of the three classes the girl whom they found most to their liking. The marriage was concluded forthwith with the help of a priest and notary, and the next day the Governor caused the couple to be presented with an ox, a cow, a pair of swine, a pair of fowls, two barrels of salt meat, and eleven crowns in money.³

In addition to this generous dowry, girls who married before they were sixteen were given "the King's gift" of twenty pounds, an added encouragement to both parties.

Such attractive gifts did not appeal only to the qualified, and it was inevitable that before long certain stipulations had to be made concerning the caliber of the girls to be sent from France. In 1667, Talon made a further qualification in asking for some

demoiselles—well-brought-up young ladies who could serve as officers' wives. Of the 109 girls who arrived, the Intendant considered that fifteen to twenty were "of sufficiently good birth." In 1670 he asked for four more of the same quality; but when the generous King sent fifteen instead, Talon found himself faced with a delicate situation which neither his efficiency nor experience could manage. With eleven *demoiselles* loose on his hands, he sent a desperate note to His Majesty, begging him to curb his royal generosity. By 1668, the type of young lady who was volunteering as a "King's Girl" sometimes left much to be desired. It had been discovered that in some cases Quebec had been used as a port of escape for dissatisfied wives, and in others, for lazy orphans who thought that their twenty-pound dowry would last a lifetime. Marie, in a letter to Claude, comments rather wryly on the "mixed goods" brought by the latest vessel, adding: "There are Portuguese, Germans, Dutch, and others from all sorts of places. There are even some Moorish women. . . . The first one to be married was a Moor."

Marie, watching the immigration not only of the King's Girls but of the soldiers, the workmen, the families who were being sent out at the King's expense, knew that the face of New France was changing. In a letter written in the fall of 1665 she noted:

The hundred girls that the King has sent this year have only just arrived, but they are already in possession. He is going to send two hundred more next year, and then others in proportion to the need in the years following. He has also sent some men as suitable husbands, and this year alone about five hundred have come, without counting those that make up the army. It is an astonishing thing to watch the country being peopled. They say that the King is determined to spare nothing, egged on as he is by the lords who are here and who find the country magnificent in comparison with the islands of America from whence they have come and where the heat is so extreme that it is hard to keep alive. Although that country is rich because of its exports of sugar cane and tobacco, they are unable to grow wheat and so are forced to make their bread from a kind of root. Here, wheat, vegetables and all sorts of grain grow in abundance. . . . This abundance does not exclude the fact that we have here a great number of poor, for two or three years must elapse from

the time a family begins a farm until it provides any nourishment. . . . But once these first difficulties are over, they can begin to take it easy, and if they manage things properly they will become rich in time.

What astonished her most of all in this new prosperity which she saw growing up about her, was that money—that commodity which had rarely passed through the French colonists' hands—was becoming the ordinary means of exchange. Speaking of the newly arrived gentlemen, she comments: "They pay in cash for everything they buy, both for their food and their other necessities; the inhabitants find this very convenient."

If poverty was less evident outside the monastery, it did not diminish within. The very year which brought so many material advantages to Quebec, brought new losses to the nuns. Much of the goods they were counting on from France had been left behind because the boats had been so packed with emigrants that the stores destined for the Ursulines had been abandoned on the wharves. "We will be rather seriously inconvenienced," Marie commented, "but one must suffer a little." Then she added one of her reiterated motives for gratitude, "I thank God for having put us in a country where, more than in any other, we must trust completely in His Divine Providence."

What was far harder to endure than the pricks of poverty was the persecution which she still saw directed not only against the Bishop and the Jesuits, but against herself and her nuns as well. Sometime before, the charge had been brought that the Ursulines had no legal title to the land which they were using, and every effort was made by the members of the Company to discredit their grant. Desperately, Marie had turned to De Mézy, who was at that time still the Governor, but he was hardly of the caliber to stand firm against the coalition which had formed; and it was not until the arrival of De Tracy that the matter was satisfactorily settled. It is small wonder that Marie could characterize the Lieutenant General as "a man chosen by God for the solid establishment of this country, for the liberty of the Church and the ordering of justice."

Sometime after the conclusion of the affair, Marie wrote to Claude:

We have not been exempt from crosses; for they have tried to deprive us of our grant, saying that our titles—completely confirmed as they were—were only impostures. This was being debated at the time that I was almost dying. Our Lord gave me enough strength, nevertheless, to write in opposition to these gentlemen. I sent my account to the Governor, begging him to delay this matter until the arrival of Monsieur de Tracy, who would, after being properly informed, make some judgment. He did me this favor in spite of the gentlemen, who inveighed against me in an extraordinary way. Monsieur de Tracy, having appraised the situation, promised us his protection and waited for the arrival of the Intendant to settle the question. You see, my very dear Son, that everywhere God's servants are subject to suffering, but the Divine Majesty will espouse their cause so that they will succeed.

It is in dealing with such affairs as this that both Talon and De Tracy showed that passionate love of justice which characterized them both.

Talon especially was every inch an administrator, with an administrator's talent for seeing both the forest and the trees. Once he took over his duties, the citizens grew used to the custom, which he inaugurated, of reading his civic ordinances at the door of the church, following Sunday Mass. The scope of these ordinances was boundless, including anything which might have some bearing on the commonweal. There were regulations concerning marketing, poaching, the sale of brandy, pew rents, mad dogs, stray hogs, quarreling in church, fast driving, and a multitude of others. Talon, for all his kindness, demanded discipline; and that was perhaps the greatest kindness of all in a town which had been a prey to arbitrary and inconsistent government.

During the fall of 1665, Talon's job was impossible—even for him. To keep order among over two thousand people in a city built for five hundred demanded a magician, not an administrator. Since the soldiers of the Carignan-Salières regiment formed over one third of the population, Talon was not sorry to hear that at least a portion of the troops were leaving for active service. The scheme had originated with Courcelle who had decided that since the Mohawk had made no overtures for peace, they should be the first to feel the scourge of war. The advice that January was

not marching weather in the Canadian wilderness went unheeded by this man who, as Father Le Mercier describes him, "breathed nothing but war."⁴ His only reply to all obstacles was that he had the picked troops of the French Army. In January, five hundred of these picked troops started up the frozen St. Lawrence. Hampered by heavy packs and the Indian snowshoes which they still managed clumsily, many of them never got beyond Three Rivers. The rest of the expedition was a nightmare of bitter winds, heavy snows, hunger, and cold. Were it not for the native-born Canadians, the force might have perished utterly. When they staggered back into Quebec in early spring they had little to boast of.

And yet something had been learned on both sides: Courcelle now realized the preparation in wilderness tactics necessary for his soldiers; the Mohawks realized the strength of the force which was being sent against them. When the second expedition started out on the feast of the Holy Cross, September 14, 1666, it was composed of 1300 men, over half of whom were Canadian volunteers. This time they were provided with Indian scouts to reconnoiter the ground. This expedition never had the opportunity to engage in the stiff battle for which they were prepared. Sheer terror at the unbroken line of soldiers wending away farther than they could see was the Mohawks' undoing; and town after town fled before the regular and inescapable beat of the French drums. Thus three towns were taken without a single casualty and all in record time. Before the end of October, the news of the victory had reached Quebec.

With their cabins and foodstuffs burned and their warriors in flight, the arrogant Iroquois were forced to acknowledge defeat; and, as the French had hoped, they soon sued for peace. While the negotiations dragged on, frequently delayed by sporadic killings by the irresponsible young braves, the Ursuline boarding school reaped some of the fruits of French victory. In joy, Marie marked the entrance of their first Iroquois pupil:

An Iroquois woman has given us her daughter on the condition that she will become French, as we are. This child, who has a fine character, has been so taken with the mysteries of our faith and of the French spirit that she does not want to return to her relatives. . . . Monsieur de Tracy has also brought to us

some other Indian women and young girls who had been held captive and who in their captivity had forgotten both our language and all the truths of the faith. He himself has very generously provided for their clothing and has agreed to pay their board.

One of these girls later married a Frenchman—"with a good farm," Marie notes with her eye trained to practicalities. Another, an Algonquin, was instrumental in converting her Iroquois fiancé, a mooning, lovesick savage who was constantly underfoot to the amusement of the nuns. Of this romance, Marie wrote:

. . . he had such a passion for her that he was continually in our parlor for fear that the Algonquins would carry her off. Finally we were forced to give her to him on the conditions I have just mentioned and in the interests of peace. I would not have believed that a savage could have such a great love for a stranger. We saw him lamenting and tongue-tied, raising his eyes, knocking his feet together, going and coming like an imbecile, while the young lady only laughed at him; yet even this did not offend him.

The effects of love differed little from country to country, the nuns agreed, as they watched the lithe, confident young Indian grow bashful and awkward in the presence of the poised Algonquin maiden whom love had placed in the ascendancy.

Of all the new arrivals brought by the fortunes of war to the monastery, none created such a stir as Madeleine Bourgerie and Anne Baillargeon, who many years before had been captured by roving bands of Iroquois. At the time of their delivery, Madeleine was fifteen and Anne eighteen. They had spent nine years among the Iroquois, adjusting so completely to the Indian way of life that when the French soldiers burst in upon them, telling them they had come to take them back to their own people, it was bewilderment rather than joy that filled their eyes. Madeleine, only six at the time of her captivity, could barely remember another home; Anne could, but apparently her memories were not all happy ones, for the freedom of her forest existence seemed far preferable to her. With a courage bred by her Indian training, she slipped away from the soldiers into the forest, determined she would never return to the French. But no sooner had she lost herself amid the giant trees than a figure suddenly arose before her—a strange figure

dressed in black, with a long black veil, and wearing a crucifix which evoked forgotten memories in the startled Anne. The figure told her with grave resolution that she must return to the soldiers and accompany them to Quebec. Fear forced her to obey; and on May 28, 1666, De Tracy presented to Marie his two wards to be registered among the French pupils of the boarding school. Frightened and shy, stammering in their efforts to speak and understand a forgotten French tongue, they were tragic, alien figures caught between two worlds, neither of which seemed really theirs. But as Anne raised her eyes to look at her new surroundings, she cried out with amazement: in the portrait of Mother St. Joseph hanging on the wall she recognized the figure who had spoken to her in the forest.⁵ It was the kind of miracle one could easily attribute to Mother St. Joseph; and to the nuns who had known her immense longings to gather all the Indians about her, it seemed only fitting that after death she should be seen walking through those vast forests which she had visited so often in spirit during her life.

Meanwhile vocations continued to be a problem for the Ursulines. Canadian postulants sometimes came, but they did not always stay, even though some affluent persons were found to provide their dowry. Occasionally letters from France informed them of nuns aspiring to the Canadian Mission; but frequently there were obstacles: wars on the sea, lack of money for passage, opposition from family or ecclesiastical authority. In a letter written in the fall of 1666 to Mother des Anges of Tours, Marie commented that the houses of Bourges, St. Denis, and Rouen had all offered her volunteers; but Marie, recognizing as she always had, the need for solid and constant virtue for such a vocation, concluded that she intended to accept only the two volunteers from Paris, "because their vocations are strongly authorized."

Once again the problem of the Canadian Union was interjected as a difficulty in the matter of vocations. Apparently a French religious, interested in offering herself for this mission, was upset by the rumors spread abroad in Tours that the Tourangelle Constitutions had been entirely abandoned in favor of those of Paris. Determined to get at the truth of the matter, this religious had written to Father Ragueneau, asking for some explanation. When this matter was brought to Marie's attention, she was angry and

annoyed. Always the enemy of groundless rumors, she was doubly irritated at this irresponsible gossiping which could have such profound and far-reaching effects. She replied to the charge with some asperity in a letter to Mother des Anges:

. . . everything that has been said about reversing our constitutions at the preference indicated by our Mothers from Paris is false and no more than a conjecture. Here we have looked only for God and His glory to form a holy union without regard to Paris or Tours. If I had seen any distortion caused by preferences in so important a matter, I would rather have died than permit it. In affairs of this nature, one must be reasonable, not wanting all for our side and nothing for the other, otherwise this would not be a union but a tyranny.

Thanks to God, these matters are in a very fine state; what we have done has received the approval of the Holy See, through the Bishop of Petraea, our Vicar Apostolic, who has given his approbation for both our union and our constitutions. Thus we have the right to make foundations anywhere, presuming we have our superiors' permission in the ordinary form. Things being thus, how has anyone the temerity to sow words which only tend to cast bitterness into hearts and alienate them from our mission. May God pardon and bless her. The Congregation of Paris has heard all this talk, but this has not diminished their charity toward us nor their zeal for Canada, although they were in a sense more concerned in this than we were.

Although she denounced in strong terms this anonymous sower of discord, the letter as a whole lacks the impetuous spirit which she had shown in answering earlier detractors. She was growing old, as her letters of these years so often attest; and her health, although sufficiently returned to permit her to carry on her duties, had been seriously impaired. "I have become extremely weak," she admitted to Claude, regretting that she did not have the strength to carry out her duties as superior as well as they should have been. But, she concluded in a letter written a few weeks later, "It is my greatest joy to endure some little suffering for our Jesus, who has endured such frightful pains for love of us."

It was more than mere bodily weakness, however, which had tempered her natural asperity. Her unswerving fidelity to God had been rewarded by God's best gift: a profound interior peace,

deep and strong, which ran like a powerful current beneath the accidents of human existence. It was of this peace that she wrote to Claude in the fall of 1666:

I don't wish to say that one becomes impeccable, for that would be an illusion; but one does enjoy the liberty of the children of God with an inexpressible sweetness and tranquillity. The intricacies of business affairs, the vexation of the devils, the distractions caused by creatures, crosses, sufferings, sickness—none of these can trouble nor disturb the depths, which is the domain of God; I believe that only sin and deliberate imperfection would be able to do so.

Once, many years before, long before her entrance into religion, God had spoken to her interiorly. "Peace be to this house," He had said; and so effectual had been His words that she, silent and still before His merciful power, thought that never again could anything disturb her. Yet within weeks, the first tempest of interior trials swept over her with a violence which shook her to her depths. When she emerged, shaken but purified, she recognized how little she had understood of the peace of God. In the forty years that followed, God taught her, sometimes quite darkly, often quite painfully, what it meant to be faithful to the infinite God. She learned, although she did not realize she had learned it until long afterward, that there are no limits to His desires, nor to His exactions, that in the freedom of His Divinity He asks what He will beyond pattern and method. But she learned also that there are no boundaries to His grace nor to the degree of union to which He destines a soul. When Claude wrote to her that he felt that he should base his whole life on his attraction to prayer, her reply was tinged with something like horror that he should so limit the inspirations of the Holy Spirit:

It seems to me that you are placing limits to the spirit of grace which is leading you when you say that it is to the spirit of prayer and union that you should devote yourself for the rest of your life. No, do not believe that—at least, not without a revelation to that effect; for in this new state of union with eternal wisdom upon which you have entered, you will, if you are faithful, advance continually into further communications with Him. He is a bottomless abyss who will never say to souls whom He possesses, "Stop—that is enough."

Even as she wrote, she was a little amused at her own vehemence, recalling the days when her total concept of the interior life had been in terms of the spirit of prayer and conscious divine union; everything else had been subordinate to that. Now, often too weak to kneel through Mass, she gathered her ebbing strength to listen to the endless accounts of unpaid bills and deferred tuitions, to counsel the young professed, to supervise the internal affairs of the boarding school, to offer encouragement and advice to the missionaries and administrators who came to her in the parlor—and in her moments of leisure there was her great dream of composing an Indian dictionary.⁶ And at night, while the rest of the household slept, she wrote to Claude. "In the little bit of life that is left to me there is nothing that makes me happier than to talk with you like this," she acknowledges simply; "you are dearer to me than anyone else in the world." Never were her letters more limpidly clear, more spiritually revealing. She had passed through the stage where there had been secrets to keep; now there was only God and His wonderful mercy to her. Austerity and detachment had done their work well—they had purified her, leaving in their wake a woman serenely simple, a unique woman, shaped by no pattern, formed by no mold. She had arrived at the supreme victory of being wholly God's, and in her triumph had become wholly herself.

She felt a change in herself, spiritual as well as physical, and wondered if it did not herald approaching death. "I used to have a very strong and robust constitution," she wrote to Claude, "but nowadays my whole temperament has changed." Some people, she continued, felt that this was the result of overwork, but added, "I know that it is the goodness of God which has sent me this sickness, for which I thank Him with all my heart."

I have never really recovered from my serious sickness; it has resulted in some very painful aftereffects, which become more bearable as one grows used to suffering. . . . The root of this illness is a liver complaint which has kept hold on me for three years. . . . I am so weak that I can kneel for only about a quarter of Mass, and even then I have to lean against something. This weakness is a result of not being able to take sufficient food, for what I eat in the day is only about a fourth of a normal meal and hardly enough to keep a child alive.

I have been worse since Easter, so that today they are wondering how I keep alive. Even the little food I take disgusts me because everything tastes bitter as absinthe to me, which puts me constantly in mind of the gall given to Our Lord during His Passion. I have had a fresh trial with an abscess which formed in my head about three months ago and which made me deaf in one ear. This caused me extreme suffering, not to speak of the inconvenience when I was in the parlor or settling business matters, as well as dealing with the Sisters. This inconvenience bothered me more than the actual pain because it made others suffer. Finally the abscess burst and emptied out through the ear, with a severe increase of pain. My deafness disappeared with it, and now I am back to normal. . . . With my habitual indisposition I could always stay in bed and do nothing; but actually I do not stop for a minute. I am always first up and last to bed, and it is rare that I take any rest. I am present at all our observances. When I learned of your sickness, and how weak it left you, I thought we might meet on the road to eternity; but another thought followed the first, which was that you would reach the goal first, since I am lacking in virtue, and you have already outrun me in the state to which God has called us. I am only nineteen years older than you, and these years are a cause of great shame to me. You became a religious when you were not more than twenty, and when I did so I was already thirty-one; you have already accomplished more than I. Let us perfect this work, or rather let God in His goodness perfect His work in us. Beg Him to be merciful to me and forget all my faults. Just the same, I enjoy great peace because I have to do with a Father who has always given me great graces. I hope that He will continue them and that at the moment of death He will receive me into His arms under the protection of His most holy mother. When you hear this news of me, I beg of you to obtain for me all the Masses that you can. I trust you for this.

Her joy and wonder and gratitude that her son was a priest never diminished. But she was too much the mother ever to admit that her son was fully grown up. When Claude tells her that he has not been well, she cannot rest without suggesting causes and remedies; when his anticipated letters do not arrive, her anxiety is as great as though he were still a schoolboy instead of a Bene-

dictine monk, Assistant General of his congregation, and a man very close to his fiftieth birthday.

The fact that she herself was growing old impinged upon her from many directions. In 1662, she had received word of the deaths of Dom Raymond and Mother St. Bernard, to whose direction and assistance she owed not only her Ursuline vocation but her missionary vocation as well. Four years later came the news of the death of the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, who had received Marie in audience shortly before her departure for the New World. Quebec, always grateful for Queen Anne's efforts in their behalf, draped their churches in black and celebrated a Requiem with all the pomp at their command. "Magnificent" is the adjective used by the writer of the *Jesuit Relation*, who added that "nothing like it had ever been seen before."⁷ Within the convent itself death claimed Mother St. Dominique, the second Ursuline to die in the New World.

Death had broken so many ties that now, when Marie began a letter to Tours, she found it difficult to envision the community that would share it. Her superior, her novice mistress, several of her companions had all reached heaven before her. Mother de la Nativité was still there, however, and it was frequently to her that Marie wrote. Having just been relieved of her duties as superior of the Tourangelle convent, she had written to Marie confiding that she had been hurt at the charges of overseverity which had been leveled against her government. In her reply, commenting on the qualities which she considered necessary in a superior, Marie obliquely provides a little portrait of herself. She warns of the necessary distinction to be made between severity and exactness, commenting that she feels that a great deal of criticism of authority in these days stems from a lack of discipline and austerity among the young religious. Preferring the spirit of the world to that of Jesus Christ, they will, of course, find an exacting superior uncongenial. It is the old Marie who comments drily:

They have undoubtedly interpreted exactitude as severity, and yet there is much to be said in favor of both of them. What I do think is true is that souls in these days do not like anything which restrains nature, nor are they able to correct their unruly inclinations. No, my dearest Mother, have no regrets on this subject. . . . Nature is growing old; she is on the decline. That

is why a certain laxity of body and soul wants to conquer and suffers very much in seeing itself overcome. It is truly deplorable that the maxims of Jesus Christ are being destroyed in those very souls whom He has chosen and called for the purpose of making them reign. . . . But, my dearest Mother, I am only a poor blind thing who is so often wrong that you ought not to put too much stock in what I have spoken to the ear of your heart. . . .

Marie, too, had hoped to be relieved of her duties as superior this year; but in the elections which had been held during Lent of 1667, she was confirmed in office for another three years. Even this did not disturb her peace, and she wrote tranquilly if somewhat wistfully:

In our elections which were held last Lent I was sure that the community would have pity on me and remove me from my charge as superior. But they did not listen to my prayers; and so I must submit to this second yoke and join it to the burden of my sufferings. . . . He has put this charge upon me at the age of sixty-seven; yet He gives me enough strength to bear it, for I feel a special energy in conducting the business of the community, although matters are very thorny for us.

Her glance was often directed toward the past in these last years of her life. Although she enjoyed a sense of fulfillment in watching Quebec grow to full stature, she was disturbed at the problems which the increased population was bringing. The devout colony which had assembled together for Sunday Mass and solemn Vespers, which had followed the fasts and the feasts of the Church with obedient devotion, had been transformed into a sprawling, and sometimes brawling, society. Violations against the peace were growing more frequent and more serious. When news was brought to the convent that one of their little girls had been brutally attacked on her way home from school, the religious were frightened and enraged that such criminals were abroad among them. The Ursulines were soon implicated in a more proximate outburst of violence, when two of their workmen, involved in a drunken brawl, were held on charges of murder.

But if the corrupting influence of evil waxed stronger, the spirit of religion grew apace. During these years, the devotion to the Holy Family and to St. Anne, which were to characterize French

Canada far into the future, took permanent shape.⁸ In the Ursuline monastery itself, devotion to St. Anne was also growing. As early as 1651, Madame de la Troche, mother of Mother St. Joseph, had donated a fund to be used for a votive Mass of St. Anne to be said annually on September 7, her daughter's birthday. In April of 1657, a little chapel within the Ursuline church was dedicated to St. Anne. Of this event the *Annals* note: "On the 29 of April 1667, Monseigneur de Laval blessed the first stone of a Chapel in honor of St. Anne in our church; the cornerstone was laid by Monsieur de Tracy, who undertook the entire construction at the cost of over two thousand pounds."⁹

The increase in population had brought new pupils to the Jesuits as well as to the Ursulines, with the result that the course of study offered became more and more like the curriculum of French schools. In the summer of 1666, the Jesuits were able to announce the first disputation of the Jesuit College. Once again officialdom was present; and this time in order to stir up the interest of the young students, Jean Talon agreed to take part in the debate. One of his opponents was a young man who was one day to be noted less for his Latin dialectic than for his pioneering spirit: this was Louis Joliet, who, six years later in the company of Father Jacques Marquette, was to distinguish himself for the discovery of the Mississippi River.

In every way the face of Canada was changing. In 1667, the *Jesuit Relation* commented:

We can assert that it is no longer that forbidding and frostbound land which was formerly painted in such unfavorable colors, but a veritable New France—not only in the salubrity of its climate and fertility of its soil, but in the other conveniences of life, which are being revealed more and more every day.¹⁰

Even the newly arrived Father Beschefer, still a little nostalgic for the motherland, who begins his comment by saying, "I would not have much trouble in giving you a description of Kebec, for there is but little to say . . .," ends by admitting that the wilderness was indeed receding:

You must know that Canada is not as savage as has been imagined; and that in the French settlements we find almost the same comforts as in Europe, while the tables of persons who have money to spend on them are as good as in France.¹¹

The King continued to lavish his personal care upon this new kingdom, continuing his generous dowry to young married couples, his bonuses for large families, his prodigal gifts of horses and cows, goats and sheep. The Ursulines received their own share of the royal bounty, and in the fall of 1667 Marie wrote to Claude with childlike glee: "We have been given for our very own two beautiful mares and a horse which we use for both ploughing and carting."

The man largely responsible for Canada's increasing prosperity was Jean Talon, whose capacity for work was equaled only by his zeal for the welfare of New France. Little by little Talon began to establish lucrative trading relations with France, the Antilles, Madeira, and other ports in both Europe and America. Fisheries of all kinds were soon in full operation; mines were being explored; hemp and flax were cultivated; staves, masts and other essentials for shipbuilding were being manufactured and exported. The manufacturing of cloth and leather, hats and shoes was soon under way. Even a brewery was established, with Talon justifying this measure by saying that perhaps the availability of home-brewed beer would keep the colonists from seeking anything stronger. It was with deep regret that the citizens of Quebec learned that Talon had asked for a temporary leave of absence.

In the fall of 1667, Marie wrote a long letter to an old friend, Father Antoine Poncet, who had left New France under a cloud of misunderstanding following his implication in the Jesuits' quarrel with De Queylus in 1658. No one knew so well as Marie what it had cost him to leave, and to leave so darkly, the country for which he had hoped to give his blood. From time to time Marie had written to him, long letters filled with those precious details which she knew would be so full of meaning for him. She told him of the Jesuits' missionary success with the Iroquois, of the pupils—now grown—to whom he had taught their catechism, of the wonderful peace which reigned between Bishop and Governor:

At present everything is wonderful, and it is a blessing of God to see the union which exists between our Bishop and our Fathers. It would seem that these and the Fathers of the seminary are one. Monsieur de Tracy, who has told me his feelings on the subject, is delighted (as is His Majesty) with the church and the

good works that are being accomplished. Your Fathers shine here as usual and are indeed one of its [the Church's] greatest ornaments. You would see little children who in your time were just beginning to learn their letters, today wearing cassocks and studying theology. Your college is flourishing and our school—which is no more than a grain of sand in comparison—provides excellent subjects. You saw as little girls some to whom we have now given the habit and others to whom we are on the verge of giving it—all destined to be choir religious. You would weep with joy to see such happy progress; and in reflecting for a moment on the way things were and the way they are now, you would bring yourself to forget all your past difficulties. You saw us when we were but three religious who had the privilege of making the voyage to this country in your presence; today we are twenty, and still asking for more from France.

As she wrote, she thanked God once again for having kept her—despite her weakness of body and soul—in this land of grace, the country of her dream. Once God had promised that in Canada she would serve Him at her own expense, and she remembered the terror that had overwhelmed her at the thought. Even then, after so many years of grace, how little she had understood of His mercy. It is true that He had not promised her the cross in vain; yet at each new encounter she had found not the cross but the Crucified. His grace was there before her, strengthening her, sometimes imperceptibly, for the sacrifice that Love would ask. It was all God's work; she knew that now. Her own fidelity was no longer the centrality of her life. She had come at last, after so many struggles, to the *unum necessarium*: the blind, unswerving conviction that God is faithful.

CHAPTER 21

When on the morning following Cardinal Mazarin's death, the royal ministers asked Louis XIV to whom they should now go for advice and approval for their various projects, the young King had answered unhesitatingly, "You will come to me." His reply formed the basis of his long and autocratic reign. Nothing was beneath his consideration: the number and type of emigrants sent out to New France, the restrictions concerning trade, the stipulations concerning the ownership of land and cattle. It is not surprising, then, to learn that Louis became deeply concerned with the education of the Indians and their progress in what every Frenchman chose to call "civilization." To be civilized, of course, was to be French; and in memorandum after memorandum Colbert pointed out to the Canadian administration their duty to convert the savages into Frenchmen. In 1668, Colbert had written to Laval in the King's name:

I beg you to work at this so that by your example all the ecclesiastics and even the fathers of the foremost families will be incited to labor with that warmth and enthusiasm which such a worthy cause demands.¹

Laval, after almost ten years in New France, recognized difficulties in this approach which neither Colbert nor the King was in a position to see. He saw what the Jesuits had long seen, that to be Christian does not necessarily demand that one be French. The expression of such an unorthodox opinion would have been extremely unwise, however, as the Jesuits were well aware; for from the beginning the Fathers of the Company had been discredited by their enemies for not being willing to go along with the policy of enforcing a French civilization. Their system of forest missions was looked on as suspect, and their whole attitude was interpreted

as an effort to keep the Indians under their spiritual thumb in order to augment their personal power. Thus Talon wrote to Colbert in October of 1667:

The Jesuit Fathers, to whom I extended a reprimand of sorts—very civilly, of course—for not having up to this time given sufficient care to the manners and customs of the savages, have promised to work at a complete reformation of the savages, beginning with their language.²

The Ursuline boarding school was also seriously affected by this royal wish for the establishment of French civilization among the Indians. Marie commented wryly that the King wanted all the savages turned at once into polished people! Although she continued to describe the measures taken toward this end by the Jesuits, the Sulpicians at Montreal, Laval, and the Ursulines themselves, it is evident from her tone that she had serious misgivings concerning the project. To Claude she admitted her doubts quite frankly:

Our Bishop is maintaining a number of French and Indian boys in his house, toward the end that the latter will adopt the customs of the others, and thus become "frenchified." The Fathers are doing the same, and the priests of the seminary at Montreal intend to imitate this. As for the young girls, we have mixed our French and Indian boarders to the same purpose. I don't know how this will all end, for to be quite frank with you, I find it a difficult business. For as long as we have been in this country, we have not been able to civilize more than seven or eight of them. The others, although remaining good Christians, have all returned to their relatives.

That Marie was able to distinguish so clearly between being French and being Christian indicates an extraordinary perception in an era which was largely blind to such distinctions. In a letter to the Ursuline superior of St. Denis she continued to question seriously the wisdom of what they were being forced to do:

Although we have been bringing them up ever since we arrived here, nevertheless we have raised according to French custom only those whose parents insisted on it and some little orphans who were completely in our charge. The others were only transients, and remained with us a month or more before giving

their place to others. But at present we have to civilize all of them in this way, even clothing them in French style, which is no small expense, for there isn't one of them whose support doesn't cost at least two hundred pounds.

Although the matter of added expense was not her first motive for questioning the King's plan, it was, nevertheless, an element which caused no small amount of worry. Despite the increased number of French pupils, the income for the school and convent was never more than barely adequate. Marie had always regarded personal poverty as a blessing, but when the poverty of the convent prevented their helping the poor, she found it a cross very hard to accept. One of the few operative laws among the savages was that of universal hospitality; despite their own destitution, what they had was always to be shared with the guest. Thus when Marie was forced to refuse some of the Indian children, she knew that she had broken one of the savages' strongest customs. With real sorrow and shame, she wrote to Claude:

I have just had to refuse, to my great sorrow, seven Algonquin boarders because of our dearth of provisions, the officers having carried off everything for the King's troops, which were in desperate need. Never before, despite our poverty during all our years in Canada, had we ever refused anyone, and the necessity of doing so has been a very painful mortification to us. . . . We have to confine ourselves to sixteen French girls and three savages; two of these are Iroquois, and the other a captive whom we are supposed to instruct in French. All this is in addition to the poor, who are here in great numbers and with whom we must share whatever we have.

In describing the condition of their school and convent to the Ursuline superior at Mons (who was then considering the possibility of sending some volunteers to the Canadian Mission), Marie notes that they then numbered twenty-three religious, of whom three were still novices. Four of the twenty-three were coadjutrix Sisters, all of whom were of French birth. Of the remaining sixteen professed choir religious, six were from France and nine had made their vows in Quebec, although two of these were of French birth.³ It is surprising to find that in the fourteen years between 1657 and 1671 not a single French Ursuline had come to join the Canadian Mission.

The number of both their French and Indian pupils fluctuated rapidly. Ordinarily they counted from twenty to thirty boarders, for each of whom they charged 120 pounds a year. As for the Indians: "We accept them free; but even then, their parents, who are passionately devoted to their children, think they are doing us a favor in letting us have them," Marie wrote to Claude in 1669. Their boarders were still coming to them from great distances—as far as 150 miles away, despite the fact that Bishop Laval had established a school at Montreal to supply the needs of these far-off places. It was hard, the nuns found, to give their charges a thorough education when they were often with them for only a few months, and when among the externes almost anything—harvesting, planting, bad weather—was an excuse to keep them from school.

With the movement to integrate the Indian pupils with the French, education became even more complicated. Since it was impossible to teach such varied backgrounds in a single class, the nuns decided to conduct separate classes, although they kept the children together in social situations. Writing to Claude, Marie explained: "We have only seven choir religious employed in teaching the French children. . . . The Indian children sleep and eat with the French, but they have their own mistress for their classes, and sometimes more than one, depending on their number." It is no wonder, then, with the increasing amount of work and the meager number of vocations, that Marie was not enthusiastic about Laval's suggestion for an Ursuline foundation at Montreal. In her informal report to the Archbishop of Tours she wrote:

There has been talk of establishing us at Montreal, but the affair has quieted down for the time being. The Abbé de Queylus, who is the temporal and spiritual father of the Sulpicians, has promised us his protection when the time comes. We are not sorry about this delay, because we are not yet strong enough to undertake such an important foundation. Our Bishop, who acts with great prudence, feels the same way.

Although no Ursuline house was ever to be founded from Quebec, nevertheless it was a compliment to have both De Queylus and Laval interested in such a project. It was a further compliment to read in the *Jesuit Relation* the unstinted praise bestowed upon their labors by Father Le Mercier, then Jesuit Superior:

The Ursuline Mothers have had such great success in the instruction of the girls who have been confided to them—whether boarders or the day scholars who frequent their classes—that in visiting the households of Canada and each house in particular it is very easy to distinguish by the Christian education of the children the mothers who have come out of Ursuline houses from those who have not had that advantage.⁴

It is strange that at the same time that the Ursulines were receiving such praise at home they were being discredited abroad. In 1667, Claude had written, calling to his mother's attention the rumor that was gaining credence in France concerning the uselessness of the Ursuline mission in Canada. This was, as even Claude in his most obtuse moments must have known, a very touchy subject—and one to which Marie gave a full and forthright answer. After describing at some length the scope of their work, she concluded with a little of her old asperity:

Well, there are the fruits of our labors. I wanted to give you some details about them to offset the gossip you tell me is going around, that the Ursulines are useless in this country and that the *Relations* never mention anything they do. The Fathers and our Bishop are delighted with the education we are providing for the youth here. They let our little girls make their first Communion when they are only eight years old because they find them so well prepared. What if people do say we are useless because the *Relation* never mentions us—isn't this to conclude that our Bishop and his seminary are useless, that all the priests at Montreal as well as the Hospital nuns here are useless, since the *Relations* don't talk about them either? . . . If the *Relation* doesn't speak of us, nor of the other groups or seminaries of which I have just spoken, it is because they talk only about the progress of the Gospel and those events which are connected with it. Besides, after the copy is sent from here, many things are cut out in France. The Duchess of Sennessay, who writes to me every year, informed me last year of her displeasure at seeing something omitted, and she told me very much the same thing again this year. . . . My dearest Son, what we do in the Church is seen by God, not by men. Our cloister hides very much, and it is difficult to talk about what one does not see. We shall await our reward from Him who penetrates into the most hidden places, and who sees as clearly in the darkness as He does in the light. That will be enough for us.

It was particularly difficult to accept this charge of "uselessness" when she saw her nuns worked beyond their capacity in their effort to staff their expanding school. The hope of getting new recruits from France would be short-lived if this rumor took root in France, for few religious would risk the peril of the Atlantic in order to give themselves to a lost cause. How could people believe that a girls' school was useless now when the population of New France had already doubled in the last few years and when immigrants continued to pour in in almost unmanageable numbers? In 1668, when the Carignan-Salières regiment had been ordered home, over four hundred soldiers and officers had asked for the privilege of being discharged in order to become permanent settlers. Meanwhile, new boatloads of King's Girls were sent over to supply the growing demand for robust and energetic wives. Although many of the girls found their first winter in Canada full of terrors and hardships, for the most part they seemed to thrive on the pioneer way of life. In his history of Montreal, Dollier de Casson noted enthusiastically, "Although the cold is very wholesome to both sexes, it is incomparably more so to the female, who is almost immortal here."⁵ Not only was she immortal but she brought forth her progeny with such ease that in a single year between six and seven hundred children were born in New France.⁶

Not all the newcomers were the stuff from which stable citizens are made; many of them were adventurers interested in an easy fortune, men of neither faith nor honor who stained both the cross and the fleur-de-lis. In 1669, Marie had written sadly to Claude:

It is true that large numbers of people are coming here from France and that the country is at last being populated. But among the decent people there is a lot of riffraff of both sexes, who are causing a good bit of scandal. It would have been better for this new Church to have had a few good Christians rather than a large number who give us so much trouble.

With the increase in population came a proportionate increase in Canadian vocations, but despite these native vocations, the nuns, on the advice of Bishop Laval, continued negotiations for new recruits from the mother country. The fact that Marie had

been on the mission for thirty years had not altered her viewpoint that Canadian vocations would never maintain, unaided, that ideal of order and spirituality which monastic life demanded. Such an ideal, she felt, necessitated the example of religious who had been trained in France. Writing to the superior of St. Denis, she acknowledged:

We would have been delighted if the Mother from your house had come over this year with the religious from Rouen. But there have been so many delays over the latter that our Bishop has grown weary, and prefers that, because of our immediate need, we accept novices from this country. We have already received four, and a fifth is on the point of entering. But it is very clear to us that in order to maintain the religious spirit in this country we will always have to have some religious from France.

The affair proceeded slowly; for although many nuns had volunteered, when the actual moment for a decisive step was at hand, some unexpected difficulty always loomed on the horizon.

In the fall of 1669, however, the Ursulines were happy that they were not awaiting the arrival of new missionaries, for during October, Quebec endured the worst storm of its existence. Writing to Claude a few days after the conclusion of this storm, Marie recalled:

The houses of the Lower Town have been very badly damaged, for the river was so swollen that it reached up to the third story. The tempest was so strong that our house shook just as during the earthquake. The chimney and the rafters of the house where our workmen live were blown away. Our wooden fencing was knocked down, as was that of our Bishop, the Hôtel Dieu, and the Jesuits. The loss caused by the storm in Quebec alone is estimated at more than one hundred thousand pounds.

This storm delayed the anticipated return of Jean Talon for another year, and it was not until August of 1670 that the Intendant arrived in Quebec. In his company were not only a group of new colonists and a consignment of King's Girls under the care of Madame Bourdon, but also several Récollet Friars to help with the increasing missionary activity.

Although Marie was then close to seventy, she was youthfully

jubilant at the many baptisms which were then taking place in Quebec and the surrounding territory. When she learned the possibility of the Ursulines of St. Denis staffing a mission at Martinique, her years fell away and revealed a spirit as joyfully enthusiastic as that which had founded the Quebec Mission thirty-one years before. When the superior of St. Denis spoke of the various obstacles in the path of such a venture, Marie would have none of it. If one were to give in to all the difficulties posed by the pusillanimous, then much of the good which God ordained would go undone. When after prayer and consultation with experienced persons one has arrived at a knowledge of God's will, there is an obligation to go ahead; otherwise one would often abandon a good work which with a little patience could easily be accomplished. Recalling their own situation, she continued:

More than once I have seen plans formulated for sending us back to France from fear of the English and Iroquois; and when our monastery was burned you would hardly believe the sufferings and miseries we had to endure and how we had to do battle to resist some very wise heads whose power and prudence seemed to convey our duty to us. Nevertheless, here we are still. God has blessed our single-mindedness and has made those who were determined to have us return acknowledge at last that God wants us in Canada.

If in her seventy years something of energy and physical endurance had burned out, nothing of her zeal was diminished. She still prayed, now more deeply and more penetratingly: "In spirit I go round the wide world in search of all the souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus. . . ." Her journey had been not only a spiritual one but an actual one; she had gone farther around the world in her search for souls than any woman religious had ever gone before her; and if others after her were to extend the distance, it was because she had gone before them, showing them the way. It is no surprise then to come across a letter written only six months before her death which expresses her hope that her heaven would be spent, as her earthly existence had been, in gaining souls for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ:

I must acknowledge that I would love to go on living if I were capable of helping in any way the souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ; I would want to go on living until the Day of

Judgment for such a wonderful work. But I know I am unworthy of this. Offer Him my good will, and if it is His will that I die soon, ask Him that since I was not worthy in this life, after my death He will give me paradise for this, sending me for all time throughout the whole world, wherever it will be for His glory, so that I may win the hearts of all those who do not love Him and do not know how lovable He is. Is it not unbearable that there are still souls who do not know the God whom we serve?

It was in this same spirit of enthusiasm that she continued to make plans for new Ursuline recruits to staff the Quebec Mission. Noting that three or four of the community were well on in years, she remarked that it was only prudent to think of replacing them, since they might all die off at a single blow. For this she would like competent religious, in good health, between twenty-four and thirty years of age, for she felt that at that age they should be better able to adjust to the type of life and work they would find on the mission. During the past few years, many of the French houses had offered subjects: Mons, Vannes, Bourges, Paris, Carcassonne had all evidenced a desire to send missionaries to the New World. In the end the religious of Bourges and Paris were chosen, and Marie, anxious as always that her house of Tours should not feel discriminated against, explained at length the grounds on which the choice had been made. Apparently, feeling ran high against the religious of Paris, for Marie affirmed forcefully, "They have none of the prejudices of which they are accused; they are very humble and very affable daughters."

Such ungrounded criticism of those who had sacrificed so much for their mission vocation wounded Marie deeply; and when she learned that the Tourangelles were saying that they would be glad to come to work in New France provided they would be free to establish their own house at Montreal independently of the Quebec house, she was angered and hurt at the injustice of their judgments. Thus, one of the last letters she ever wrote was to her own community—which she loved so dearly and which throughout her years of exile had caused her so much suffering—in a final effort to make them realize that it was not a question of taking sides but of ordering all things in the union of charity:

I was astonished when I learned that some of your Sisters had announced on several occasions that they would gladly come to Canada if they could establish themselves alone at Montreal.

I cannot believe this is true, but if it is, I like to think that it was a word that escaped unthinkingly. For, my dearest Mother, can you see in such statements anything of the Spirit of God who unites hearts whom He wishes to serve Him so that they are all one? Are such utterances worthy of a soul who wants to sacrifice all natural attitudes for the conversion of the Indian children? If you knew what Montreal was like, you would be very careful not to send your religious there; and even should you wish to do so, our Bishop would be careful not to permit it, especially newcomers who are not yet accustomed to the country. Further, even those who would be sent there would not be able to live without being changed from time to time because of the difficulties of the place. There are several other very strong reasons which charity demands that I be silent about. However, we really need not be concerned about these difficulties, because the Sulpician Fathers who are in charge there want only secular religious who will be free to go out here and there to help the people.

Despite her ill health, she still tried to keep abreast of her enormous correspondence; yet her letters were much shorter than in the old days before her strength had failed. Now, even her letters to Claude lacked the minute detail that had characterized her earlier correspondence. Speaking of her health, she admitted to a nun at Tours, "My health is a little better, but I don't know how long this will last. I know only that a person of seventy cannot have far to go." In the same year she confided to this same nun the utter weariness she experienced even after writing a single page:

For myself, although I am extremely feeble, in His goodness He gives me the strength to write my letters, which are still so numerous that the number would dismay you. A quire of paper is soon used up, and my hand gets so tired that I can barely support it. Yet one must take courage and go on to the end; I have only about forty more which must be finished before the end of the month.

And yet, despite her weakness, she allowed herself no exemption from the rule, even keeping the Lenten fast in its full rigor: "In a word, I do my duty," she wrote to Claude, adding however, "I sing so low that I can't be heard because I no longer have the strength to chant in a full voice."

Despite her unquenchable zeal for the future, her thoughts were often of the past during these last years of her life. The news that Claude had been chosen as Assistant General for the Congregation of St. Maur brought her an unspeakable joy. There was a new dignity and a new respect in the letter she wrote to her niece, speaking now not of her son but with righteous pride of "Father Martin." When, the following year, Father Martin sent to the Ursulines of Quebec a meditation he had composed for the feast of St. Ursula, her pride knew no bounds. On that very day she wrote telling him that the whole community had made its meditations from the points he had suggested and that the nuns were in admiration of its solid doctrine and devotion. Would it not be possible, she asked, for him to do something similar for the days within the octave of the feast? She was asking him at the instigation of the community.⁷

The fact that her son was a priest, bound irrevocably to God by the vows of religion was, perhaps, Marie's greatest consolation. The years of pain and uncertainty which her separation from him had caused were more than balanced by the faithful mercy which God had shown to them both. It was an old lady who in the summer of 1669, just thirty years to the day since her arrival at Quebec, wrote for the last time her recollections of those strange and anxious years following her entrance into religion:

Aren't you glad now, my dearest Son, that I abandoned you to His divine guidance when I left you for love of Him? Haven't you found an inestimable happiness? You realize now that when I was leaving you I endured a living death; and yet the Spirit of God was so inexorable toward the love I bore you that He would give me no rest until I did what I had to do. . . . I thought that in leaving you so young, you would not be properly brought up in the path of God; or that you might fall into evil hands or else do something that would endanger your salvation. And thus I would lose a son for whom I wanted only one thing: that he dedicate himself to the service of God. . . .

Yet this Divine Spirit, knowing my struggles very well, still had no mercy on me, but kept repeating in the depths of my heart, "Hurry! Hurry! It is time to go; there is nothing more for you to do in the world." Thus the door of religious life opened before me. . . . You came with me that day and I thought that when I left you my soul would be torn from my body.

After I had entered, when you came crying to the parlor or to our choir grating, trying even to get in through the communion grill, managing to get through the door into our courtyard . . . some of the novices cried, telling me that I was cruel not to be crying myself. But these Sisters never saw the anguish of heart I endured for you, nor my obligation to be faithful to the will of God. The battle began all over again when you came crying to the grill, begging either that they give your mother back to you or permit you to become a religious with her. But the greatest blow you ever inflicted on me fell on the day that a group of boys your own age came looking in the windows of our refectory, screaming that they had to let me go back to you; and through it all your voice stood out above all the others, crying that you had to have your mother. The community, seeing all this, was deeply moved with compassion, and although no one complained to me about your outcries, nevertheless I felt it was something that could not be endured indefinitely and that soon I would be sent home to take care of you. But when I was going back upstairs to the novitiate, God spoke to me, telling me that I must not become so upset by all this, for He Himself would take care of you. . . .

From that time on I suffered no more, and my heart enjoyed a profound peace in the certitude that these promises would be kept.

It was no longer either Claude's suffering or her own which drew her to contemplate those painful years of misunderstanding which had raised such a barrier between them. Her reflections now had only a single focus: the wonderful delicacy of His Providence which had arranged all to the last jot and tittle. When Claude answered her letter, begging her pardon for the suffering he had caused her, she was quick to reply, "Why do you ask my pardon for what you call the follies of your youth? Don't you realize that everything had to happen just that way so that the consequences would give us real cause to bless God." "Everything had to happen just that way . . ." It is the deepest clue she gives to that all-pervasive spirit of faith which was always hers, but which was hers now with the effortlessness given by grace. All was as God would have it, and she would change no part of it. "Don't ever again let me hear you say you would prefer solitude and a retired life to charges and employments," she scolded her fifty-one-year-old son, as she had scolded him as a novice. What

one did or did not do no longer mattered; God was all and would do as He pleased. "It seems to me that I am very useless," she wrote that same year; but the thought did not depress her as it might once have done. "In comparison with my Sisters I do nothing that matters," she added, resting quite tranquilly in the awareness of her own powerlessness. It was not simply that her physical powers were failing; she who had so loved the truth saw more clearly with each year how little she had to show in her own behalf. And yet as death approached she felt no fear, for the words which had initiated her into the mystical way had taken deep root in her soul. "I have trusted in Thee, O Lord, and I shall never be confounded," she had been praying that morning in Tours when without warning she had found herself plunged into the Blood of the Son of God. They were the same words now which in spite of her unworthiness kept her from fear:

Here I am at the end of my life, and I have done nothing worthy of a soul who must soon appear before her Judge. And yet, unworthy as I am, and prostrate in His presence, I see myself lost in His Divine Majesty who for several years now has kept me in such a state of intimacy and close union with Him that I cannot really explain it.

The old fear that had plagued her for so long—that the imperfections which she recognized in herself were incompatible with that state of union to which God drew her—no longer had any power over her. The faults which in her frailty she committed were now but further reasons to lose herself in His pure love. Without embarrassment she acknowledged to Claude that often she walked about the house quite unconscious of what was going on about her, so closely did God draw her to Himself. In her last effort to satisfy her son's insatiable demands for accounts of her prayer, she wrote:

It would be very difficult for me to enlarge upon this in order to give you an account of my prayer and of my interior disposition, for what God gives me is so simple and detached from all sense experiences that in two or three words I have said everything. Hitherto I could do nothing in my prayer except to say from the very core of my being: "My God, my great God, my Life, my Love, my Glory." Today I say very much the same thing . . .

but even more, my soul uttering these simple and intimate words feels the fullness of their meaning. Thus what I do in my actual prayer I do all day—on retiring, on rising, throughout the whole day. Thus, I cannot follow any particular method, everything being determined by God's interior influence upon me. I take just a little quarter of an hour in the evening to present the heart of the Son of God to His Father in behalf of this new Church, for the workers of the Gospel, for you, and for all my friends. Then I speak to the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Family—all by very short and simple aspirations. The Office, which is an exercise of rule, causes me no difficulty, but rather consoles me. I can still follow easily all the other points of regularity, so that far from having my interior recollection turn me from them, it seems to me, on the contrary, that I feel an interior desire to observe them perfectly.

It was perhaps the utter simplicity of her life even more than her failing strength which made the community realize that they were not to keep her with them much longer. Their efforts to conserve her strength, to provide her with little delicacies which they considered suitable, met with little success. "When they see me a little sick, they all think I am going to die," she wrote with amusement to a religious at Tours. She herself realized that the moment she had often longed for could not be far off. She spoke to Claude of "that happy hour," the time of which God still kept among His secrets. Although her health was no worse than it had been since her illness, she knew that her years were taking their toll. Even the medicine which the doctor had prescribed was, she knew, not a remedy but only a means of alleviating some of her more painful symptoms.

Her last active winter on the missions was one of the most difficult she had ever endured. Snow piled up in mountainous drifts, and the cold which seemed more intense than ever lasted far into May. Even in June the nuns still found traces of ice in their garden. Since Marie still retained the burden of superiority, all the problems which the severe winter brought were laid upon her shoulders—broken water pipes, insufficient fuel, sick cattle. For the last time, she made her decisions and gave her orders; and on March 12 she remitted her office into the hands of Mother St. Athanase. Recalling the hardships of that winter,

she wrote in the fall of 1670 to Mother St. Joseph, the newly elected superior at Tours:

All the winters are very cold in this country, but the last one has been extraordinary for its intensity as well as its duration. We have never experienced a worse one. All our water pipes were frozen and our springs were dried up, which gave us no small amount of trouble. At the beginning, we melted the snow in order to have some water for ourselves and our cattle; but we needed such large quantities that we could not take care of it. We then had to solve the problem by sending our cattle to look for water down at the river, but this almost ruined them, for the mountain is very steep and icy. Even in June we still had ice in our garden. Our trees and new grafts, which bore excellent fruit, are all dead. . . . We have been accustomed to this sort of thing in the thirty-one years we have spent in the country, so that we have had sufficient time to forget the sweetness and delicacies of our Old France.

With the coming of summer, the nuns had hoped to welcome the promised recruits from France; but July and August passed without further news of the missionaries. On September 15, however, feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, a Quebec merchant, lately arrived from France, brought them the happy news that four religious from France were on a ship which had stopped at the Ile aux Coudres. It was fourteen years since the last religious had arrived from the mother country, and the excitement of the nuns was so great that they decided to send a small boat in the care of some of their servants in order to hasten the new missionaries' arrival.

The religious whom they welcomed with such joy were Marie Gibault du Breuil de St. Joseph and Marie Drouet de Jésus—both of Bourges; and Marie Lemaire des Anges and Soeur Marie Dieu de la Résurrection of Paris. Before they resumed the full restrictions of cloister, Bishop Laval insisted that they be taken to see some of the missions close to Quebec. Thus several days after their arrival, they made a pilgrimage to the Indian village of Notre Dame de St. Foye, about two miles from Quebec, where Father Chaumonot had modeled a shrine after his great devotion, the Holy House of Loretto. Later, accompanied by Madame de la Peltrie, they visited Sillery, which still merited the renown of

being the first successful mission for the Hurons and Algonquins. The task of instructing the newcomers in the Indian languages fell to Marie, who was then also in charge of the novices and the young professed. Ever since her illness had kept her from many of the more active occupations, she had given herself with renewed vigor to the task of composing dictionaries and other aids for the study of the Huron and Algonquin languages. Remembering her own initial struggles with these barbarous tongues, she was determined to facilitate study for her Sisters. Two years earlier she had written to Claude at some length concerning her work:

My task on winter mornings is to teach our young Sisters. There are some of them who are far enough along to know the rules and the forms, provided that I translate the Indian into French for them. But to learn a set number of words from the dictionary—this is a thorny task for them. Of all our young Sisters, there is only one who pushes ahead with any vigor. Our Mother Assistant and Mother St. Croix have sufficient knowledge, because in the beginning they learned the dictionary by heart. As these are very difficult subjects, I am determined to leave before my death as many written helps as possible. From the beginning of Lent until the Ascension I wrote a large Algonquin book of sacred history and holy things, along with a dictionary and an Iroquois catechism which will be invaluable. Last year I compiled a large dictionary according to the French alphabet, and I have another in the Indian alphabet.

The long, hard winter, the excitement of the new arrivals, the added hours of instruction for them—all these had tired her; and the letters she wrote to Claude that fall were surprisingly short. Her prayer was now too simple and too pure to lend itself to analysis; and she who had never wanted to subject herself to analytic scrutiny found herself intolerably weary before Claude's demand for description and explanation. Having done her best to answer his questions on her spiritual life, she concluded: "I wish that I had the ability to explain myself more clearly, my dearest Son, but I cannot. If there is anything else you should want of me, I will not fail to answer you, provided that I am still alive and am able to do so." But there was never to be another chance to explain herself more fully.

Before her death God was to ask for one more sacrifice, the death of Madame de la Peltrie. On November 12, the foundress was seized by a bad attack of pleurisy; and three days later it was clear that she would not recover. The nuns and children who loved her so dearly, knowing that they could not cure her, did what they could to alleviate the suffering of those last few painful days. But she would have nothing of the comforts they brought her, begging them to clear the table in her room of the delicacies which she did not need. On November 15, she made a formal will at which Jean Talon himself presided. She had few requests as she had few possessions. She asked only that, as death approached, the religious would say the psalm she had always loved, "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord." Some time before, Marie had written to Father Poncet, "She is a saint; it is wonderful to watch her grow in virtue." Whatever differences there had been between them in those stormy years when Madame de la Peltrie had left the Ursulines for Ville Marie had long been forgotten. Marie knew her worth as no one else could. She understood the ardor and impetuosity which had often verged toward caprice; she understood also the struggle of controlling an imperious temperament so constantly that those who knew her less well thought her sweetness and docility were natural qualities. And even had there been less understanding between them, the bond which linked them together would still have been there. It was stronger than natural affinity, stronger even than a conscious charity: it was the bond God Himself had forged when he linked their destinies inseparably. Whatever else Madame de la Peltrie was to Marie, she was first and foremost the woman sent by God, the woman of her dream whom God himself had chosen. "It is Canada that I have shown you; you must go there and build a home for Jesus and Mary," God had told her thirty-five years before. And together they had come, and they had made a home as God had commanded. And now, although she was the older and the more feeble, Madame de la Peltrie was going before her to another home.

On the evening of November 18, a little after eight o'clock, she took her departure while the psalm of homecoming was chanted as she had requested. Her funeral Mass was offered by

Monsignor de Bernières, vicar of Bishop Laval, then in France, and nephew of the man she had once asked to be her husband. He was assisted by Father Lalemant, a frail, worn figure almost in his eightieth year. When the Mass was over and the mortal remains of Madame de la Peltrie were laid to rest beside those of Mother St. Joseph, Marie knew that she was an old lady who waited now only for life's final event.

Actually she had not long to wait, for on January 1 she was stricken suddenly and mortally by her old ailment. This time her tired body could do little to throw off the infection, which settled especially in her chest, making her breathing labored and painful. The doctors agreed that there was little hope of recovery and suggested that she receive the Last Sacraments. For the third time in her life she submitted to the cleansing ritual of Extreme Unction. Her hands, her feet, her eyes were signed with the cross of salvation while she offered herself once again to the God of mercy. From the first moment of her illness she was certain that this time she was going to die; yet when Father Lalemant told her that he wished her to ask God to cure her, she was surprisingly docile. She answered yes, with the single qualifying clause, "if you really think I am needed."

Her prayers seemed to bear immediate fruit, for almost at once the most violent symptoms of her illness were alleviated. Still desperately weak, she managed to get out of bed, and soon, despite the penetrating chill of winter, she insisted on walking about the monastery leaning heavily on two canes. As February drew to a close, her slow, heavy steps grew no lighter and Lent itself was for her a penance in very deed. Once again, now more than ever conformed to the Crucified, she participated in the services of Holy Week. But shortly after Easter she had to acknowledge that she could not go on. In addition to her chronic liver infection, two huge abscesses had formed on her wasted body, which the doctor advised should be opened at once. Although she was sure that no treatment would keep her from death, she submitted to the exigencies of obedience. The pain of the operation was intense, for the doctor cut to the bone in an effort to cleanse the wounds completely. Although her long years of austere control kept her from any voluntary sign of her

suffering, she could not control the trembling of her body in its agony.

Eight days following this operation, the doctor admitted that death was imminent. Marie, who had known all along that it would be so, accepted his verdict with quiet serenity. Despite the pain in which she lived, she insisted on having the little French and Indian boarders brought to her that she might bless them for the last time. When Mother Anne de Notre Dame, the only religious from Tours then in the community, realized the truth, she was beside herself. She knew that had it not been for Marie's maternal love and strength she would never have persevered in her vocation, and she could not bear the thought of being without her. In answer to her cry, "You don't want to go without me, do you?" Marie answered simply, "You mustn't be like that; God will always be your Father."⁸ She spoke very little in those last days—a word of apology or gratitude or consolation, but little more. When, toward the end, Mother St. Athanase asked if she did not have a last message for Claude, she smiled. Through the years of separation how many messages there had been for Claude: the verbal messages sent with the Jesuits returning to France, the short notes tucked into every mail pouch, the long, long letters written during the quiet night hours. It was not weakness alone that kept her from sending a last long message to Claude; all had been said, and actually only a single message mattered: tell him, she asked Mother St. Athanase, how happy she was that he was a priest and that in heaven she would continue to pray for his sanctification. On April 29 she was desperately ill and once again she received the Last Sacraments. The following day she lost the power to speak and lay, apparently unconscious, with her hands still holding her crucifix. That evening about six o'clock she opened her eyes as though to say good-by to the community which she had founded and which she loved so well. Then two little sighs, and Marie de l'Incarnation, wife and mother, mystic and missionary, was dead.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Pierre Coton ably managed his difficult position and after the death of Henry IV remained at court as confessor to Louis XIII. Even more important, however, was his success in having the first Canadian Mission at Acadia placed in Jesuit hands. Unsuccessful as this venture was, it set the stage for the future missionary conquest of Canada.

2. *Société Archéologique de Touraine*, IV, 177. Hereafter referred to as SAT.

3. Robert Dallington, *The View of Fraunce*, 1604 (London, 1936), p. T2v.

4. Marie de l'Incarnation, *Ecrits Spirituels et Historiques*, edited by Albert Jamet, O.S.B. (Paris, 1929-39). All further quotations from Marie's notes and letters will be taken from Jamet's edition unless otherwise indicated.

5. To prove the divine reality of this dream, Paul Renaudin suggests that we keep two facts in mind: that Marie herself never doubted the supernatural quality of this experience, and that it effectively changed her life. "... Marie never believed this dream to be like others. . . . This descent of Our Lord, this question that He asks the child, these are for her things absolutely real, with at least a moral reality. . . . The second fact is that this dream acts upon her with force and gives a living impulsion to her religious life. . . . Let us suppose a dream which had impressed her, which had flattered the vanity of this little girl and which she had embellished in recounting it: six months later, what will remain of it?" Paul Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation* (Paris, 1935), p. 17.

6. SAT, "Bulletin," XII, 104.

7. The most complete source for the work of these great Benedictines is the chronicle of Mother Jacqueline Bouette de Blemur. It is she who provides the interesting details of the restoration of

common life, remarking that this was a far, more formidable obstacle than the enforcement of cloister. Henri Brémond, *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France* (Paris, 1930-38), II, 325.

8. Claude Martin, *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* (Paris, 1677), p. 9.

9. This episode does not argue pusillanimity on Marie's part nor cruelty on the part of her parents. Parallels are not difficult to find—notably, Jeanne-Françoise Fremiot married to M. de Chantal, and Barbe Avrillot to M. Acarie. In both cases the goal of religious consecration was ultimately reached.

10. Renaudin calls this period a spiritual springtime, commenting: "Marie preludes her life of union by a prayer naïve, free, affectionate, happy, in which we do not hesitate to see an image of the purest prayer. God could not give Himself more sweetly, the soul of the creature could not respond with a more joyful spark." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 35.

11. If, as some of her biographers think, this marital difficulty had its source in her mother-in-law, who apparently lived with them, it must have been entirely cleared by the time of Claude's death, for at that time Marie wrote that her mother-in-law was fearful that she might leave her alone. Actually, the elder Madame Martin's fears were ungrounded, since she died about a month after her son. Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 179, 483.

12. Dom Martène, an eminent Benedictine scholar of the period and a devoted disciple of Dom Claude, wrote his master's life shortly after his death. It appeared in 1697 under the title *La Vie du Vénérable Père Dom Claude Martin, Religieux Bénédictin de la Congregation de Saint-Maur, Décédé en Odeur de Sainteté au Monastère de Marmoutier* (Tours, 1697). Unfortunately, Dom Martène had acted without the approbation of his superiors in this matter, and his work, the purpose of which had been to extol the merits of Dom Claude, did no more than put both master and disciple under a cloud. Jamet in *Ecrits*, I, 97. The monastery of Marmoutier was founded in 375 by St. Martin, Bishop of Tours. It is significant that one day Marie's son would assume the superiorship of this monastery. See P. Delalande, *Histoire de Marmoutier* (Tours, 189—).

13. The date of his birth is that given by the Catalogue of Priors of Marmoutier (SAT, "Mémoires," XVII, 581). Some other records adhere to April 1.

14. The Feuillants were originally Cistercians of the Monastery of Notre Dame des Feuillans in Toulouse. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Jean de la Barrière, a youth of eighteen, was made commendatory abbot and with the slogan, "J'ai relevé Bernard," began a program of reform which in its rigor and efficacy parallels the later tactics of De Rancé. The reform took hold, and by 1620 the influence of the Feuillants in France was well assured. M. Alberic, *Compendium of the History of the Cistercian Order* (Gethsemani, 1944), pp. 236-38.

15. Martin, *Vie*, p. 29; cf. Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 45.

CHAPTER 2

1. Dom Claude is not clear on this point; possibly she returned each night to her father's house during the next period of five years. However, since her capacity in her sister's house was one of "housekeeper," it seems more logical to maintain that she lived in her sister's home from 1621 on.

2. The Huguenots were in particular disfavor in the spring and summer of 1621, for the Martin Lenoir riots had occurred in April of that year. This disturbance, which began with a few unruly children mocking a Huguenot funeral, assumed immense proportions; for several days the streets were barricaded by the police in a futile attempt to dispel the mobs. The Protestant temple was burned to the ground, and five Catholics were hanged in reciprocity. Jean Chalmel, *Histoire de Touraine* (Paris, 1828), II, 459.

3. Renaudin is careful to point out that this direction solely by the Holy Spirit is not to be considered in any sense heretical. It is very far from the errors of either illuminism or quietism. In the classic treatise, *The Spiritual Doctrine of Father Louis Lallemant, S.J.*, we read: "When a soul has reached complete purity of heart, God instructs it Himself." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 54.

4. Martin, *Vie*, p. 331.

5. Renaudin comments, "Poor woman! trying to raise herself to contemplation with the wings borrowed from the theologians, and foundering miserably." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 53.

6. Martin, *Vie*, p. 42.

7. Marie uses the word *tendance*—a word essentially untranslatable. Here it is an inclination "to something that she does not know and which can be satisfied by no created object." Jamet, *Ecrits*, I, 157. Dom Claude defines it as "a violent movement of

the heart which makes her aspire to the possession of her Spouse." Martin, *Vie*, p. 133. Renaudin takes the word in its broader implications: "this word is one of those from Marie's mystic language which expresses much more than the current word; it is a true interior state which prepares her to receive a favor or a new state of prayer." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 57.

8. Jamet sees here a new characteristic of the divine action which indicates progression in the mystic way: "In the first case [her former manner of prayer] this communication began sweetly by a sort of peaceful insinuation of the Holy Spirit. . . . Here, on the contrary, from the moment of prayer properly-so-called there is a rude invasion, a violent seizure of the soul and its faculties—not only of the will, as in the first degree of passive recollection, but of the intelligence and the inferior powers of memory and imagination and even, by repercussion, of the exterior senses. . . . With this seizure by the Holy Spirit the soul is no longer its own mistress either to resist or to escape. . . . Her act, however, remains free in virtue of the preceding liberty by which she has consented." Jamet in *Ecrits*, I, 240.

CHAPTER 3

1. Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 59.

2. Martin, *Vie*, p. 63.

3. "Occupation" is a frequent word in Marie's mystic vocabulary; "a revealing word," comments Renaudin, who sees in it the passive quality of Marie's spiritual way. "There is no effort on Marie's part; on the contrary, she undergoes a divine operation. . . . It is a word which is humble, poised, much more reserved than 'trance' or 'rapture.'" Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, pp. 60, 72. Cf. M. Aloysius Gonzaga l'Heureux, *The Mystical Vocabulary of Venerable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation and Its Problems* (Catholic University of America, 1956), pp. 84-87.

4. Many years later, when Claude asked her for a fuller description of this grace, she replied, "What was communicated to me concerning the mystery of the Incarnation was so sublime that I cannot say anything more about it than what the Church has already said." It was, she told him, one of those "impenetrable secrets" which will be explored only in heaven.

5. Renaudin, commenting on the "selfless" quality of her spirituality, remarks, "She is a soul made for joy and adoration. Her

devotion to the Incarnate Word is as un-anthropomorphic as possible." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 76. The whole problem of Marie's Christocentric spirituality is an interesting one, particularly in the light of the religious climate in which she lived. The contemporary schools of Bérulle, Teresa, Ignatius, all of which exercised profound influence in France, were essentially Christocentric in their approach. It is hard to agree with Jamet that Marie's Christocentric character was an independent attraction, catching nothing from the climate about her. It would seem to be rather as Renaudin suggests, that she was consciously moving in the "most profound occidental mystic tradition, and a French tradition in particular." Brémond, *Histoire Littéraire*, III, 228; Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 190; Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 51.

6. The importance that this experience assumed in her own mind is easily seen by the number of descriptions which she wrote of it: it was explained in the *Relation* of 1633 and again appears, in length, in the *Relation* written from Canada in 1654; in a letter written to Claude, dated October 8, 1671, several pages are given to a fuller explanation of this rapture. It is further alluded to in a supplement to the *Second Relation*. Jamet feels that it had also been the subject of a special account no longer extant, written for Father de la Haye.

7. It is difficult to determine if this was her last letter. Jamet died before completing his scholarly edition of Marie's letters; Dom Claude's editorial policies make a definitive chronology impossible. Richaudeau follows this letter by another which is undated and which he conjectures was written in the end of October, several weeks after the letter in question. P. F. Richaudeau (ed.), *Lettres de Marie de l'Incarnation* (Tournai, 1876), II, 539.

8. *Ibid.*, II, 513-14.

9. This account of her first vision of the Trinity, so beautifully described from the point of view of the mystic, has been the cause for much dissension in the ranks of her biographers. The point which has caused most discussion is Marie's phrase, "I had never been instructed in this great and adorable mystery." To say, "What, does she not know her catechism!" is surely to miss the point. The God of the mystic is certainly the same as the God of the faithful; the same mysteries are worshiped by all, but as Renaudin suggests, "This interior revelation differs in its mode from the exterior and collective revelation registered by the Church and transmitted to the faithful." Assuredly Marie knew her catechism, but it is here a question not of knowledge but of certitude.

CHAPTER 4

1. Both Marie and John of the Cross use the word *touche* frequently. By way of explanation Renaudin comments: "The metaphors of touch seem to be the last resort of the mystic to express the divine presence in the soul." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 84.

2. Martin, *Vie*, p. 99.

3. Jamet in *Ecrits*, I, 242.

4. Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 69.

5. Jamet, commenting on the remarkably simple language, peculiarly free of poetic symbols and comparisons, with which she describes this sublime experience, notes: "Marie has preferred to be silent before the ineffable, contenting herself in expressing all that is possible in the simplest language." Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 250.

6. It is this comment of Marie's which Dom Claude has used to establish his inconclusive thesis that the first vision of the Trinity was more sublime than the second, on the grounds that there was more "light" in the first. (Martin, *Vie*, p. 105.) Marie herself has no doubt concerning their relative importance. She is too completely "Love's pilgrim," as Renaudin expresses it, ever to place light above love.

7. Of this period Renaudin comments: "She was still in the world and plunged into all the cares of the material order. This is a unique case, or almost so, if I am not mistaken, in the history of the mystics. A striking proof, at any rate, that there is no incompatibility between the highest spiritual life and the life of the world, and that when God seeks a soul, He finds it in all walks of life." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, pp. 91-92. On Marie's use of the word *tendance* see L'Heureux, *Mystical Vocabulary*, pp. 112-15.

8. Marie's "absolutely sane" temperament is one of the qualities which constantly evokes Renaudin's admiration. Those unhappily morbid phenomena which often win a bad name for mysticism are entirely absent in her. "She refutes the affirmations or uncertain resemblances of the psychiatrists. Ecstasy with her has nothing psychaesthetic about it." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 70.

9. Martin, *Vie*, p. 135.

CHAPTER 5

1. It is interesting to note that the Visitation was established in Tours five years later by a friend of Marie's, Gillette Roland, also a penitent of Dom Raymond, through whom she had been introduced to Francis de Sales. Mother Marie Gillette became one of the benefactors of the Canadian Mission, and Marie's letters to her were frequent. Jamet in *Ecrits*, I, 262.
2. The Ursulines had been founded in Brescia, Italy, in 1535 by Angela Merici. Their diffusion throughout Italy was rapid, and in 1594 the first French foundation was made by Françoise de Bermond. The most complete study of the origins in France is to be found in Mother Marie de Chantal Guedré's *Histoire de l'Ordre des Ursulines en France* (Paris, 1957). The background of the 'Tours' foundation is contained in SAT, *Mémoires*, LII, 63.
3. The Ursuline Chronicles give a glowing account of Françoise de Briant, who made her novitiate at Laval under Anne de Beauvais. Her rare gifts were recognized at once, and consequently most of her religious life was spent in positions of authority. She died while superior of the monastery at Tours on February 27, 1662. See *Les Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines* (Paris, 1673), pp. 436-38.
4. Brémond, *Histoire Littéraire*, VI, 52.
5. Martin, *Vie*, p. 173.
6. The account given by Claude of this painful episode bears in a marked degree the decorations of pious hagiography. Marie's later biographers are all in agreement that the long speeches which Claude puts into the mouth of his mother bear the marks of his own creative imagination. Marie's maternal instincts as well as her common sense would have saved her from using this episode as an opportunity for delivering a spiritual exhortation. From what we know of her interior anguish, we can be certain that her explanation was terse and simple; it is Claude, "a bit tedious by temperament and pompous by profession," who has embellished with figure and metaphor the original scene. See Brémond, *Histoire Littéraire*, VI, 55.
7. Commenting on this final act of detachment, Renaudin writes: "Marie has nothing of an austere spirit, still less of a barren heart; she is all life, gaiety and sweetness. How can we doubt that she has made herself loved when the mere thought of losing her has thrown this child into such melancholy that it will take him

a long time to recover. This mother and son have been tenderly united; everything proves it to us. Nevertheless, she has tried in advance to strengthen this heart which she is going to wound, and, doubtless, to lift him above the blow which she sees coming. Can we conceive of a more daring enterprise of maternal love? A kind of sacrifice of Abraham which lasts for twelve years. A smiling 'God will provide' sustained undoubtedly by the grace of God, but also by a singular strength of soul." Renaudin, *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 114.

CHAPTER 6

1. The author of these verses is not Paul Buisson, who did not know how to write. Perhaps they came from the hand of Marc Barillet or Sylvestre Normaud, the husbands of Marie's two other sisters, Catherine and Jeanne. Jamet in *Ecrits*, I, 290.

2. Martin, *Vie*, p. 502.

3. Ibid., p. 639.

4. Ibid., p. 548.

5. At first glance, this interior desolation would seem to be incompatible with that state of spiritual marriage which we assume Marie to have received with the second vision of the Trinity. However, the evidence of both St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa proves otherwise. Jamet comments: "Undoubtedly these nights have not the same object as those of which John of the Cross has written, which have preceded the spiritual marriage and which have prepared the soul for this grace. They are compatible with the state of possession and enjoyment. . . . One can liken them to the sadness and affliction of the heart of Christ, or to the state of Our Lady during the loss of her Son and during the Passion. Light and darkness are produced in the soul simultaneously but on different planes." Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 300-01.

6. Of this priest Dom Claude comments: "He was a good man but simple; he had neither the nobility of soul of the other [Dom Raymond] nor his experience in the direction of souls. Instead of giving the comforts and consolations that a soul in her state needed, he often aggravated the evil instead." Martin, *Vie*, p. 206.

7. Jamet in *Ecrits*, I, 320; Martène, *Vie de Claude Martin*, p. 6.

8. The exact date of Paul Buisson's death is unknown. His wife remained unmarried until 1634, meanwhile keeping her promise to provide for her nephew.

9. Father Poncet, at this time in his early twenties, was to accompany Marie to Canada in 1639. After almost twenty years of missionary activity, he returned to France in 1658 under unfortunate circumstances. After a few years he volunteered for the Mission of Martinique, where he died in 1675. Marie continued to correspond with him after his departure from New France.

CHAPTER 7

1. I have given December, 1633, as the date of this vision, as does Jamet in volume III, although some of Marie's biographers place it a year later. It is difficult to establish conclusive evidence, but certainly the balance weighs in favor of 1633. Cf. Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 303; III, 75.

2. Marie wrote three accounts of this dream: in a letter to Dom Raymond, dated May 1635; in the *Relation of 1654*; and in the *Jesuit Relation* for 1672.

3. Dom Claude, commenting on this change in her interior life, maintains that prayer, which had hitherto been a time of "repose" for her, now became burdened by this new responsibility which she felt for souls. Marie herself does not give the impression that she is burdened but rather that her heart expands through this new vision.

4. The chronology of events relative to Marie's mission vocation is confusing in the extreme. The *Relation of 1654*, written in haste and twenty years after the events she is describing, is often vague; her letters as edited by Dom Claude are sometimes undated and sometimes falsely dated. I have followed the chronology suggested by Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 321, 326.

5. In the *Relation of 1654*, Marie states that she learned of Dom Raymond's mission vocation "at the same time" that Father de la Haye had given her a definitive answer concerning her own. This is impossible, since this series of letters to Dom Raymond begins in March 1635. Her correspondence with Father de la Haye could not have taken place this early. We can explain this error, perhaps, by the fact that Marie was recalling these events after a period of twenty years and was writing in great haste.

6. Dom Claude gives the date of March 1633; this is an obvious impossibility, since it would necessitate placing the dream prior to this.

7. Martin, *Vie*, p. 332. Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 67.

8. Dom Jamet places this experience prior to May 1635, since he sees a reference to it in a letter to Dom Raymond, dated May 1635. The text of the letter does not seem to offer sufficient grounds, however, for this conclusion. Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 67, 95.

9. Father Salin, however, was considered a capable director. It was through his influence that Charlotte Barré journeyed to Canada with the first group of Ursulines, where she became the first Ursuline postulant in the New World. Later he became the director of Marie Buisson, Marie's niece, an Ursuline at Tours. Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 336.

10. It is difficult to tell how long she hesitated before writing to Father de la Haye; perhaps not more than a few months, since it seems reasonably certain that everything was settled with him by late spring of 1637.

CHAPTER 8

1. These letters are no longer extant, and we know of them only through allusions made by Marie in a letter to Dom Raymond dated October 1638.

2. Martin, *Vie*, p. 347.

3. *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1899), VII, 261.

4. He was the founder of the little group known as *L'Ermitage de Caen*, and, although a secular, was the spiritual director of many eminent persons. Among his spiritual sons was L'Abbé Montmorency de Laval, who was later appointed first Bishop of Quebec. His association with Marie was of inestimable importance to the Ursuline community of Quebec. Their correspondence, which began in the fall of 1638, continued until De Bernières' death in 1659. His younger sister was the foundress of the Ursuline convent at Caen, of which she was prioress for many years under the name Jourdain de St. Ursule. Brémond, *Histoire Littéraire*, VI, 228-33; Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 359; III, 131.

5. This company, sometimes known as the Company of New France, had been established by Cardinal Richelieu in 1627 in an attempt to bring to an end the squabbles over Canadian affairs. They assumed the obligation to send between two and three hundred colonists to New France yearly and to maintain them during their first three years in the New World. In return they would have a monopoly on all Canadian trade. While they were conscientious in collecting their revenues, they did little to further colonization.

6. The Ursuline Convent of Faubourg St. Jacques had been founded by Madame de St. Beuve in 1608 and was the most important house of the Paris Congregation.

7. Concerning this fourth vow, the Annals of the Congregation of Paris read: "To the three solemn vows (common to other religious) is added a fourth, obliging them to instruct young girls, and thus in taking this for their principal end, all their constitutions, their exercises and offices are arranged for this purpose." Quoted by Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 113.

8. We are indebted for the account of Marie de St. Bernard's life to a letter written by Marie to the superior and community of Tours at the time of the young missionary's death in 1652.

CHAPTER 9

1. Of this spiritual state, Renaudin comments that it will be the ordinary atmosphere of her soul for the rest of her life. "God hid nothing from her; already the taste of bitterness was at the core of her soul." *Marie de l'Incarnation*, p. 155.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

3. Martène, *Vie de Claude Martin*, p. 10.

4. This grant, so the act read, was to be used for the "construction of a church and a monastery of the said religious, as well as other lodgings for their chaplain and servants, along with a garden and cloister and other necessary buildings for the maintenance of the French and Indian children who will be given over to their care." This land was to extend a league along the St. Lawrence and to be ten leagues in depth. It was this concession which the officials of the Company later questioned and for which Marie had to do battle, assisted by the Governor General. Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 82.

5. Barthélemy Vimont had already spent some time at the Canadian missions in 1629; he was now returning as superior of the mission, a post which he would hold until 1645.

6. Marie de Vignerot, Duchess of Aiguillon, having been removed from the Carmel of Paris by her Cardinal uncle, gave her life to works of charity while maintaining her high position at court. She was the foundress of the first establishment of the Hôtel Dieu in the New World.

7. Of this effort Marie wrote to Mother St. Bernard, "Twice we prostrated ourselves at the feet of the Queen in order to obtain permission from the Bishop of Paris." In a letter written to Father Poncet in 1760 Marie mentions that Mother St. Jerome had not

been able to go with them because of a sudden attack of illness. However, nowhere in the early accounts is any such explanation given. Cf. Richaudeau (ed.), *Lettres*, II, 501.

8. *Les Ursulines de Québec depuis leur établissement jusqu'à nos jours* (Québec, 1863), I, 35.

9. These three religious were Anne Lecointre de St. Bernard, Marie Forestier de St. Bonaventure de Jésus, Marie Guenet de St. Ignace, superior of the group. They, too, had one lay helper, Catherine Chevalier, who would later be professed under the name of Catherine de la Passion. Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 354.

CHAPTER 10

1. *Annales du Monastère des Ursulines de Québec*. The introductory page of these Annals indicate that they were written in 1689 to repair the loss caused by the fire of October 20, 1686. The earliest Annals had, in turn, been destroyed by the fire of 1650.

2. *Ecrits*, III, 145. Three accounts of the voyage exist, of which Mother St. Croix's is the most detailed; the others are Marie's *Relation* of 1654, and the narrative sent by the Religious of the Hôtel Dieu to the Archbishop of Rouen.

3. Samuel Champlain, *Works* (Toronto, 1932), III, 308-09. Champlain was at odds from the beginning with the policies of the trading companies, who were interested in nothing but financial gain, and whose exploitation of the colonists became notorious.

4. Gabriel Sagard-Théodat, *Histoire du Canada* (Paris, 1636), p. 35.

5. Paul Le Jeune, S.J., quoted in Jean Baptiste Ferland, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada* (Québec, 1882), I, 96.

6. Champlain, *Works*, IV, 51.

7. Joseph François Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains* (Paris, 1724), p. 164.

8. Sagard-Théodat, *Histoire du Canada*, p. 42.

9. Manuscript in the Hôtel Dieu of Québec, quoted in Pierre Georges Roy, *L'Île d'Orléans* (Québec, 1928), pp. 17-18.

10. Jacques Cartier, *Bref Récit et Succincte Narration de la Navigation faite en 1535 et 1536 par le capitaine Jacques Cartier aux Îles de Canada* (Paris, 1863), p. 12.

11. Albert Tessier, *Neuve-France* (Trois Rivières, 1956), I, 30.

12. Champlain quoted in Tessier, *Neuve-France*, I, 45.

13. Champlain quoted in Pierre Georges Roy, *La Ville de Québec* (Québec, 1930), I, 64.

14. Champlain, *Works*, V, 6-7.

15. "Mademoiselle Hélène Boullé, widow of Monsieur de Champlain, Naval Captain and Lieutenant for the King of New France, founded this year a monastery of Ursulines at Meaux. She had been a novice with the Ursulines of Paris at the Faubourg St. Jacques. She left with another Ursuline who was to be the superior and with two other Ursulines of a poor convent of the Order, March 2. She made her profession at Meaux the following August 4 in a house which they had bought in that city, and where on September 11 they began to reserve the Blessed Sacrament and to observe the cloister." *Les Chroniques de l'Ordre*, pp. 425-26.

16. Father Le Jeune's joyful gratitude at the arrival of the religious undoubtedly colors his description as he writes romantically rather than realistically: "From a floating prison were seen issuing these virgins consecrated to God, as fresh and as rosy as when they had departed from their homes." *Jesuit Relations*, XVI, 19.

17. Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America* (Boston, 1898), *passim*. Most historians, however, speak highly of Charles Huault de Montmagny, who was to govern Canada until 1648 when he returned to France. Rochemonteix sums up general opinion in praising him as a "man of courage, vigilant administrator, joining to his civil and military merits the highest Christian virtues." Camille de Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle France au XVII^e Siècle* (Paris, 1896), I, 307.

18. For a detailed account of this first Canadian family, see Azaire Couillard Després, *La Première Famille Française au Canada* (Montreal, 1906).

19. Jeanne Louise Godefroy, who as Mother François Xavier pronounced her vows on August 1, 1661 (daughter of Jean Godefroy and Marie Le Neuf); and Charlotte Godefroy, who as Mother de St. Sacrement pronounced her vows on January 21, 1669 (daughter of Jean Paul Godefroy and Madeleine Le Gardeur de Repentigny). *Registres des Entrées des Religieuses Ursulines de Québec*. This Register, like the Annals, was rewritten in 1689 in an effort to repair the losses of the fire of 1686. As a result the acts of profession made while Marie was superior are not signed by Marie but by Mother St. Athanase, who was still living at the date of rewriting.

20. Albert Jamet (ed.), *Annales de l'Hôtel Dieu de Québec* (Garden City, 1939), pp. 19-20.

21. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 24-25. The Annals describe this first house thus: "Our lodging was so small that a single room, sixteen feet square, was our choir, our parlor, our dormitory, and our

refectory; and in another was the class for the French and savages, the chapel, the sacristy. . . ." *Annales du Monastère*, p. 7.

22. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 24-25.

23. Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 153. Paul Le Jeune, a convert from Calvinism, made a contribution to the mission which was enormous, and Anne of Austria later suggested him as a candidate for the Canadian bishopric. Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, I, 190-91.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

25. *Jesuit Relations*, XV, 229.

26. *Annales de l'Hôtel Dieu*, p. 25.

CHAPTER 11

1. Father Le Jeune describes their sagamité: "This *sagamité*, of which they are very fond, is made of cornmeal; if they are short of that, we give them some of our French flour, which, being boiled with water, makes simple paste. They eat it with appetite, especially when we place in it a little *pimi*, that is to say, oil, for that is their sugar. They use it with their strawberries and raspberries when they eat them . . . and their greatest feasts are of fat or of oil." *Jesuit Relations*, V, 96.

2. Jean de Brébeuf, *The Travels and Sufferings of Father Jean de Brébeuf among the Hurons of Canada as described by himself*, trans. by Theodore Besterman (London, 1938), pp. 84-85.

3. *Jesuit Relations*, XVI, 251.

4. Brébeuf, *Travels and Sufferings*, p. 169.

5. Champlain, *Works*, IV, 51.

6. *Jesuit Relations*, XIX, 65-67.

7. Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 167.

8. Martène, *Vie de Claude Martin*, p. 18.

9. Brébeuf, *Travels and Sufferings*, p. 86.

CHAPTER 12

1. Quoted in Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America*, p. 297.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

3. In the history of the Ursulines we find the statement: "Madoiselle Mance passed the winter at Quebec . . . they urged her to stay there, but instead of being weakened, she gained to her side Madame de la Peltrie, the foundress of the Ursulines, who, being

a little too much given to a taste for new establishments, wished to take part in the foundation of Montreal as she had done in that of Quebec." *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 76.

4. *Annales du Monastère*, p. 9.

5. *Jesuit Relations*, XXI, 58.

6. Quoted in *Ecrits*, III, 253.

7. René Goupil ratified with his blood that astonishing lay mission movement of the seventeenth century, the *Donnés*. The movement, which had originated in the French province of Champagne, was eminently suitable for the Huron Mission, where the priests were often forced to spend their energies on the sheer labor of eking out a living, thus curtailing their apostolic activities. By 1639 there were half a dozen *donnés* in Canada: they pronounced conditional vows, they wore a dress which distinguished them from the ordinary layman, and they engaged themselves to work for the Society of Jesus; in return the Society assumed the responsibility for their welfare. Unfortunately, the aims of such an organization were misunderstood in Rome and the use of *donnés* forbidden. It was not until 1644 that the Father General ratified this institution. Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, I, 389-92; *Jesuit Relations*, XXI, 293-307.

8. *Jesuit Relations*, XXIII, 297. Before winter set in, Marie had the consolation of a letter from Charles Garnier telling her that Thérèse was, though still a captive, well treated and admired for both her knowledge and piety.

9. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 91-92.

10. The new monastery had cost, all told, between fifty and sixty thousand pounds, an enormous sum in those days. *Ibid.*, I, 128.

11. *Jesuit Relations*, XXV, 243.

12. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 126.

13. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 29.

14. Marie's connection with the famous convent at Port Royal is not entirely clear. As early as 1641 she was writing letters of gratitude for the alms given by the abbess, commenting on their union of prayer and the "wide arms of charity." Mother St. Athanase, of the noble family of De Flécelle, had apparently several contacts with Port Royal. There is a record of the entrance of her niece there in 1659 with the unfortunate conclusion that, having refused to sign the formulary presented to her, she was exiled to the Ursulines of St. Denis. As the charge of Jansenism increased, the correspondence between Quebec and Port Royal diminished. See the notations of Jamet in *Ecrits*, III, 250-59, 331.

CHAPTER 13

1. At this time the Benedictines of St. Maur were still affiliated with those of Cluny. It was not until several years later that the decision was made to form an independent institute.

2. Claude was still considering a missionary vocation in 1645. His mother wrote, "I have no difficulty in believing that God is giving you zeal and affection for the salvation of souls." Yet she never encouraged her son to seek his vocation in foreign lands. *Ecrits*, IV, 64.

3. Writing to Mother St. Bernard at Tours, she advises: "I will be greatly obliged to you if you will exercise my dear child in mortification, helping her to profit from the vocation to which God has called her. In the name of God, have no fear in making her die to all that is too natural in her, so that this death will bring about a redoubled life of the spirit."

4. On this topic Claude wrote: "Rome itself contributed largely to her anxiety, for she did everything imaginable to obtain the confirmation of her foundation in Canada as well as the confirmation of the union of the two congregations with the new status which the condition of the country obliged them to make. But despite all the means she used to obtain these bulls, she was not able to bring the affair to a conclusion." Martin, *Vie*, p. 579.

5. Having arrived from Paris in 1640, Mother St. Athanase was to be superior or assistant superior until her death in 1695.

6. Martin, *Vie*, p. 578. This letter is not extant, and exists only in the fragment given in the biography by her son.

CHAPTER 14

1. The *Jesuit Journal* begun by Jerome Lalemant in October of 1645 was continued by his successors until June of 1668.

2. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 47.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

4. Of the three Jesuits consulted, the only one mentioned by name in Marie's account is George de la Haye, who had been her director during the period of her missionary preparations. *Ecrits*, IV, 111.

5. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 15.

6. *Ibid.*, II, 41.

7. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 142.
8. Martin, *Vie*, p. 550.
9. The first marriage of a Frenchman to a savage to be blessed by the Church took place in 1644. The dowry expected from a well-to-do colonist was not inconsiderable. It is recorded that Madeleine Boucher of Three Rivers brought with her in 1647: "200 francs, four sheets, two tablecloths, six napkins, a mattress, a kneading trough, a chest with lock and key, a cow and a pair of hogs." Charles Colby, *Canadian Types of the Old Regime* (New York, 1908), p. 336.
10. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 49.
11. Letter to André Castillon sent from Three Rivers on September 21, 1646 quoted in Rochemonteix. *Ibid.*, II, 46.

CHAPTER 15

1. The records are inconsistent in giving the date of Charlotte Barré's entrance. Jamet, apparently following the *Journal des Jésuites*, lists it as November 21. The monastery's official *Régistres des Entrées* lists it as September 8.
2. Each religious had her own handwritten copy of this Constitution. Unfortunately, all of these copies were destroyed in the fire of 1650. Father Lalemant's, however, was preserved, and other copies were made from this.
3. From the *Actes de Profession* preserved in the archives of the Ursuline Monastery at Quebec.
4. Here again the sources do not agree about the date for Catherine Lézeau's profession. In a letter from Marie to Claude, dated September 7, 1648, she mentions this profession as having taken place the preceding year; all other sources give 1648 as the profession date.
5. *Annales du Monastère*, p. 13.
6. Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 69.
7. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 119.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.
9. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 139.
10. *Jesuit Relations*, XVI, 237.
11. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 86.
12. *Ibid.*, I, 133.
13. *Ibid.*
14. When several years later Father Simon Le Moyne was working among the Iroquois, there fell into his hands a copy of De Brébeuf's New Testament. He wrote, "I recovered from the hands of one of

these barbarians the New Testament of the late Father Jean de Brébeuf, whom they cruelly put to death five years ago." *Jesuit Relations*, XLI, 119.

15. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 97.

16. *Jesuit Relations*, XLI, 138-39.

CHAPTER 16

1. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 140.

2. Father Lalemant's departure from the mission was to be only temporary. He was being sent back to France in an effort to gain the military and economic help which the young colony so sorely needed. Actually it was to be nine years before his return to Canada in the company of the newly appointed Vicar General, François Xavier Laval.

3. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 147.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

6. *Annales de l'Hôtel Dieu*, pp. 79-81. This act is preserved in the archives of the monastery.

7. This custom, begun in Quebec in 1650, still continues to be observed in Ursuline monasteries on September 8. See *Annales du Monastère*, p. 13; *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 148-50.

8. Martin, *Vie*, p. 545.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Annales du Monastère*, p. 16.

CHAPTER 17

1. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 164.

2. The five degrees of spiritual poverty which she sets down here are a kind of treatise on this virtue, which she sees as both the basis and culmination of the spiritual life.

3. *Annales du Monastère*, p. 13.

4. Quoted from the *Annales de l'Hôtel Dieu de Québec* in Roy, *La Ville de Québec*, p. 190. See also Aegidius Fauteux, *La Famille d'Aillebout* (Montreal, 1917), *passim*. Barbe's early spiritual director, although never named, may well have been Charles Lalemant, brother of Jerome, a close family friend.

5. Marie-Barbe was not easily vanquished, however, and when her

husband died in 1660 she returned to Quebec and once again entered the Ursuline monastery. This time her determination kept her in the cloister for eight months, but once again she was forced to surrender, admitting that she could not "accustom herself to the little sacrifices demanded by religious life." The remainder of her life she spent in Quebec in pursuit of good works. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 259-61. *Annales du Monastère*, p. 17.

6. Jamet in his preface to the *Relation of 1654* investigates at great length the history of this lost manuscript. He suggests that the manuscript which now exists in the archives of the Ursuline monastery at Three Rivers may be a copy of the original. On this assumption he makes a textual study of the "changes" which Claude may have made from the original document. Note of Jamet in *Ecrits*, II, 129-50.

7. Quoted in a letter from Le Mercier to the Mission Procurator in France and appearing in the *Jesuit Relations*, XLI, 219. The signature "Echon" had originally been the title given to Jean de Brébeuf and was now passed on to the new shepherd, Joseph Chaumonot.

8. Noted in the *Registres de Profession* for the Monastery of Quebec.

9. This was Genevieve Skannudharoi, whose parents were baptized Hurons. She was permitted to make her vows on November 1, 1657, and died two days later. *Annales de l'Hôtel Dieu*, pp. 95-96.

10. Quoted in Francis Parkman, *The Old Regime in Canada* (Boston, 1914), p. 144.

11. See Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 217-23.

12. Gosselin, however, does indicate that De Queylus exercised his charge with great charity toward his flock—if not toward the Jesuits. There is no question that at Montreal, where he was free to exercise full authority, he was dearly loved. Auguste Gosselin, *Vie de Monseigneur de Laval* (Quebec, 1890), pp. 111-15. Strangely and unfortunately, Francis Parkman, who would have no bias in favor of either side, ignores the Poncet episode.

13. Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 222-34.

14. Quoted in *ibid.*

CHAPTER 18

1. Actually a ship had been sent ahead to bring this news to Quebec, but it was delayed by storms and did not arrive until long after the Bishop's arrival.

2. In a letter to Father Charlet, Jesuit Assistant for France, quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 189.

3. *Ibid.*, II, 236.

4. Lalemant had returned to France some years before, and, at his superior's insistence, had remained, although his heart was obviously with the Mission of New France.

5. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 291.

6. On August 9, 1659, Laval had written to Very Reverend Goswin Nickel, the Jesuit General at Rome, to praise and thank the Society for all it had done for him personally and all it continued to do for the Church in Canada. Quoted in the *Jesuit Relations*, XLV, 21-25.

7. Strangely, Marie makes no attempt to assess the ambiguous character of the Abbé, although there is every reason to believe that he visited the monastery, since Jeanne Mance was at this time staying with the Ursulines. Perhaps she is simply living her maxim that what cannot be praised had best be passed over in silence.

8. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 268.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., pp. 278, 288.

11. Quoted in Gosselin, *Vie de Laval*, I, 245.

12. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 282.

13. *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 294.

CHAPTER 19

1. *Jesuit Relations*, XLVI, 147.

2. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 304.

3. Ibid., p. 314.

4. Parkman, who of course has little sympathy with the kind of supernatural influence exerted by De Bernières at his hermitage, indicates that De Mézy's "piety" was as fanatical and ill regulated as his reckless and dissolute youth had been. He is hardly surprised, then, at De Mézy's conduct as Governor. *The Old Regime*, 204 et seq.

5. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 329.

CHAPTER 20

1. Gosselin, *Vie de Laval*, I, 469.

2. *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 335.

3. Louis Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* (La Haye, 1703), p. 98.

4. Quoted in Parkman, *The Old Regime*, p. 246.

5. This portrait had been painted in France and sent to the Ursulines at Quebec. Concerning these two children, the annalist

notes: "On May 28, 1666, Marie M. Bourgerie, aged fifteen, and Anne Baillargeon, aged eighteen, who had been captured by the Iroquois, entered the boarding school." *Annales du Monastère*, p. 25. A further note indicates that it was Monsieur de Tracy who took care of their expenses. No mention is ever made of their families, who were probably massacred in the same attack in which the children were captured.

6. As early as 1662, she had written to Claude: "From Advent to the end of February I wrote a Huron catechism, three Algonquin catechisms, all the Christian prayers in this language, and a large Algonquin dictionary." When her poor health made teaching impossible, it was again to this work that she turned. Unfortunately, none of these precious documents are extant.

7. *Jesuit Relations*, L, 107.

8. By 1666 the little wooden church built in honor of St. Anne at Beauré was replaced by a larger stone church. In the years that followed many pilgrimages made their way to this shrine and numerous cures were reported. The *Jesuit Relation* for 1667 devoted an entire chapter to recounting the manifold cures obtained through St. Anne's intercession.

9. *Annales du Monastère*, p. 26; *Les Ursulines de Québec*, I, 257.

10. *Jesuit Relations*, L, 237.

11. *Ibid.*, L, 173.

CHAPTER 21

1. Gosselin, *Vie de Laval*, I, 558.

2. Quoted in Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, II, 292.

3. *Registre de Profession* in the archives of the monastery of Québec.

4. *Jesuit Relations*, LII, 99.

5. Quoted in Parkman, *The Old Regime*, p. 290.

6. This is the figure which Talon sent to the King—an enormous figure in terms of the current population. The census taken in 1668 indicated a population of 3215 in New France (only 547 for Québec); that taken in 1672 indicated a total of 6705. Thomas Chapais, *Jean Talon* (Québec, 1904), pp. 101, 418.

7. A copy of these meditations still exists in the archives of the monastery.

8. Martin, *Vie*, p. 727. All the details of Marie's death are taken from her son's account.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Actes de Profession*, preserved in the Archives of the Ursuline Monastery at Quebec.
- Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal*, published by the Société Historique de Montréal. Montreal, 1921.
- Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*, edited by Albert Jamet, O.S.B. Garden City, 1939.
- Annales du Monastère des Ursulines de Québec* (1689), conserved in the Archives of the Ursuline Monastery at Québec.
- Bacqueville de la Potherie, Claude. *Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale*. 4 vols. Paris, 1722.
- Barabé, Paul Henri. *Quelques figures de notre histoire*. Canada, 1941.
- Beaumier, Joseph. *Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation*. Trois-Rivières, Canada, 1959.
- Begin, Emile. *François de Laval*. Quebec, 1959.
- Biggar, Henry Percival. *The Early Trading Companies of New France*. Toronto, 1901.
- Boucher, Pierre. *Histoire véritable et naturelle des moeurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle France*. Paris, 1664.
- Brasseur de Bourbourg, Charles Etienne. *Histoire du Canada*. Paris, 1852.
- Brébeuf, Jean. *The Travels and Sufferings of Father Jean de Brébeuf among the Hurons of Canada as described by himself*. Translated by Theodore Besterman. London, 1938.
- Brémond, Henri. *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France*. 12 vols. Paris, 1930-38.
- Cartier, Jacques. *Bref Récit et Succincte Narration de la Navigation faite en 1535 et 1536 par le capitaine Jacques Cartier aux Iles de Canada*. Paris, 1863.
- Casson, Dollier. *Histoire du Montréal*. Montreal, 1871.
- Chalmel, Jean Louis. *Histoire de Touraine*. Paris, 1828.
- Champlain, Samuel. *Works*. 8 vols. Toronto, 1932.
- Chapais, Thomas. *Jean Talon*. Quebec, 1904.
- Charlevoix, Pierre François Xavier, S.J. *La Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*. Paris, 1724.

- Chaumonot, Pierre Joseph Marie. *La Vie du Révérend Père Pierre Joseph Marie Chaumonot*. New York, 1858.
- Connelley, William Elsey. *Indian Myths*. New York, 1928.
- . *Wyandot Folk-lore*. Topeka, Kansas, 1899.
- Davies, Blowden. *Quebec, Portrait of a Province*. New York, 1951.
- Després, Azaire Couillard. *La Première Famille Française au Canada*. Montreal, 1906.
- Dion, Albert. *Histoire Primitive de la Paroisse de Saint-Thomas de Montmagny*. Quebec, 1935.
- Dionne, Narcisse. *La Nouvelle France de Cartier à Champlain*. Quebec, 1891.
- . *Serviteurs et Servantes de Dieu en Canada*. Quebec, 1904.
- Faillon, Etienne. *La Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys*. Montreal, 1853.
- . *La Vie de Mademoiselle Mance*. 2 vols. Montreal, 1854.
- Fauteux, Aegidius. *La Famille d'Aillebout*. Montreal, 1917.
- Ferland, Jean Baptiste. *La France dans l'Amérique du Nord*. Montreal, 1865.
- . *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*. 2 vols. Quebec, 1882.
- Gosselin, Amédée. *L'Instruction au Canada sous le régime français*. Quebec, 1911.
- Gosselin, Auguste. *Vie de Monseigneur de Laval*. 2 vols. Quebec, 1890.
- . *La Mission du Canada avant Mgr. de Laval*. Evreux, 1909.
- Heriot, George. *Travels Through Canada*. London, 1807.
- L'Heureux, Mother M. Aloysius Gonzaga. *The Mystical Vocabulary of Venerable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation and Its Problems*. Washington, D.C., 1956.
- Hubert-Robert, Régine. *L'Épopée de la Fourrure*. Montreal, 1945.
- Jamet, Dom Albert. *Marie de l'Incarnation*. Conférence donnée à Québec. Tours, 1927.
- Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. 73 vols. Cleveland, 1896-1901.
- Jetté, Fernand. *La Voie de la Sainteté d'après Marie de l'Incarnation*. Ottawa, 1954.
- Kalm, Pierre. *Voyage dans l'Amérique du Nord*. Translated by L. W. Marchand. Montreal, 1880.
- Kennedy, John Hopkins. *Jesuit and Savage in New France*. New Haven, 1950.
- Klein, Joseph. *L'Itinéraire Mystique de la Vénérable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*. Rome, 1937.
- Lafitau, Joseph François. *Moeurs coutumes et religions des Sauvages Américains*. Paris, 1839.

- . *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains, comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*. Paris, 1724.
- Lahontan, Louis. *Nouveaux Voyages*. 2 vols. La Haye, 1703.
- Lebreton, Jules. *Tu Solus Sanctus*. Paris, 1948.
- Le Moine, James. *Histoire des Fortifications*. Quebec, 1875.
- . *Quebec Past and Present*. Quebec, 1876.
- Lescarbot, Marc. *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*. Paris, 1609.
- Les Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines*. 2 vols. Paris, 1673.
- Marie de l'Incarnation: Ecrits Spirituels et Historiques*, edited by Albert Jamet, O.S.B. 4 vols. Paris, 1929-39.
- . *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, edited by Pierre François Richaudeau. 2 vols. Tournai, 1876.
- Marion, Seraphin. *Relations des Voyageurs Français en Nouvelle France au XVII^e siècle*. Paris, 1923.
- Martène, Dom Edmond. *La Vie de Dom Claude Martin*. Tours, 1696.
- . *Histoire de la Congregation de St. Maur*. Tours, 1875.
- Martin, Dom Claude. *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*. Paris, 1677.
- Parkman, Francis. *The Jesuits in North America*. Boston, 1898.
- . *The Old Regime in Canada*. Boston, 1892.
- Parker, Gilbert. *Old Quebec*. London, 1903.
- Poulain, Auguste. *Graces of Interior Prayer*. London, 1910.
- Pouliot, Joseph. *Quebec and l'Île d'Orléans*. Quebec, 1927.
- Pourrat, Pierre. *Christian Spirituality*. Translated by Donald Attwater. Westminster, Maryland, 1955.
- Régistres des Entrées des Religieuses Ursulines de Québec*, preserved in the archives of the Ursuline monastery at Quebec.
- Renaudin, Paul. *Une grande mystique française au XVII^e siècle: Marie de l'Incarnation*. Paris, 1935.
- Richaudeau, Pierre François. *Vie de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*. Paris, 1874.
- Rochemonteix, Camille. *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle France au XVII^e Siècle*. 2 vols. Paris, 1896.
- Roy, Pierre Georges. *L'Île d'Orléans*. Quebec, 1928.
- . *La Ville de Québec*. Quebec, 1930.
- Roy, Régis. *Le Régiment de Carignan*. Montreal, 1925.
- Sagard-Théodat, Gabriel. *Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons*. Paris, 1632.
- . *Dictionnaire de la Langue Huronne*. Paris, 1632.
- . *Histoire du Canada*. Paris, 1636.
- Salone, Emile. *La Colonisation de la Nouvelle France*. Paris, n.d.

- Société Archéologique de Touraine. Bulletins et Mémoires.*
 Sulte, Benjamin. *Histoire des Canadiens-Français 1608-1880*. 8 vols. Montreal, 1882.
 ———. *Pages d'Histoire du Canada*. Montreal, 1891.
 Tessier, Albert. *Neuve-France, Histoire du Canada*. 2 vols. Quebec, 1959.
 Traquair, Ramsey. "Architectural History of Ursuline Monastery," *Journal of Royal Institute of British Architects*, Vol. 44, 1937.
 ———. *Old Architecture of Quebec*. Toronto, 1947.
 ———. *Old Churches and Church Carving in Quebec*. Montreal, 1928.
Les Ursulines de Québec depuis leur établissement jusqu'à nos jours. 2 vols. Quebec, 1863.
 Winsor, Justin. *Cartier to Frontenac*. New York, 1894.

Index

- Abenakis, 242
 Act of Union. *See* Ursuline Union
 Ahoendoe, island of, 267
 Aiguillon, Duchess of, 141, 143, 166, 189, 191
 Ailleboust, Louis d', Governor of Quebec, 256, 262, 325
 Ailleboust, Marie-Barbe d', Governor's wife, 261, 297-98
 Amboise, Ursuline monastery of, 136
Amiral, ship bringing first Ursulines, 149, 156
 Annaotaha, Stephen, Huron chief, 264
 Anne de Notre Dame, Mother, 221, 326, 387
 Anne de St. Cécile, Mother, 221, 302, 303
 Anne de St. Claire, Mother, 185
 Anne de St. Joseph Bourdon, Mother, 344
 Anne de St. Laurent, Sister, 221
 Anne des Séraphins, Mother, 302
 Anne of Austria, Queen of France, 141-42, 211, 364
 Antoinette de St. Marthe, Sister, 312
 Arenh'ton, Huron chief, 234
 Argenson, Pierre d', Governor of Quebec, 312, 318-20, 322, 333
 Attikamegues, 292
 Avaugour, Pierre Dubois, Baron d', Governor of Quebec, 334, 335-37
 Babou de la Bourdaisière, 7
 Babou, Lady Ann, Abbess of Beaumont, aunt of Marie of the Incarnation, 12, 13
 Baillargeon, Anne, Ursuline pupil, 358-59
 Barré, Charlotte. *See* Charlotte de St. Ignace
 Beaumont, Benedictine monastery of, 13
 Beaupré, 339
 Benedictine reform, 13
 Benedictines of St. Maur, 190
 Bernières, Jean de, benefactor of Ursuline mission, 123, 124, 130, 202, 317, 342
 Beschefer, Thierry, S.J., 366
 Biard, Pierre, S.J., 107
 Binet, Etienne, S.J., 127
 Bishop for Canada, discussion of, 237-38; Laval appointed, 312-14
 Blois, 76
 Bonin, Jacques, S.J., 266
 Boucher, Pierre, Governor of Three Rivers, 332

- Boullé, Hélène, Madame de Champlain, 160-61
- Boulogne, Philippe-Gertrude. *See* Philippe-Gertrude de St. Dominique
- Bourbonnière, M. de la, 123
- Bourdon, Anne. *See* Anne de St. Joseph
- Bourdon, Genevieve, 245, 291. *See also* Genevieve de St. Agnes
- Bourdon, Madame Jacqueline, 291, 375
- Bourdon, Jean, 245, 291, 344-45
- Bourgery, Madeleine, Ursuline pupil, 358-59
- Bourges, Ursuline monastery of 359, 377
- Brébeuf, Jean de, S.J., early mission to Canada, 107; during small pox plague, 172; advice to missionaries, 179, 195; premonition of persecution, 215; superior of Huron Mission, 223; work at St. Marie, 263; capture and death, 264-65, 276
- Bressani, Francis-Joseph, S.J., 239, 255, 273, 277
- Buisson, Claude, sister of Marie of the Incarnation, 25-26, 133, 137, 211-12
- Buisson, Marie. *See* Marie de l'Incarnation Buisson
- Buisson, Paul, husband of Claude, 25, 74, 94
- Buteux, Jacques, S.J., 292
- Capel, Françoise. *See* Françoise de St. Michel
- Carcassonne, Ursuline monastery of, 377
- Carignan-Salières regiment, 351, 356-57, 374
- Cartier, Jacques, 157, 158
- Casson, Dollier de, historian of Montreal, 374
- Castillon, Jacques, 157
- Catherine de St. Jerome, Mother, 139, 142
- Catherine de St. Nicholas, Sister, 185
- Catherine de St. Ursule, Sister, 250-52
- Cécile de St. Croix, Mother, vocation to Canada, 144; description of first days in Quebec, 167-69; as novice mistress, 327
- Chabanel, Noel, S.J., 276
- Chambly, fort constructed at, 352
- Champlain, Madame de. *See* Boullé, Hélène
- Champlain, Samuel de, 158-63
- "Charité," Indian pupil of the Ursulines, 236
- Charlotte de St. Ignace (Charlotte Barré), sails for Quebec, 144; returns from Montreal, 215; religious profession, 250-52
- Chartier, René, chaplain to the Ursulines, 234
- Château-Richer, 321, 340
- Chaumonot, Joseph-Marie, S.J., voyage to Canada, 149-50; mission to the Iroquois, 301; at Quebec, 322; at Notre Dame de St. Foye, 383
- Chauvigny. *See* La Peltrie, Madeleine de
- Chauvin, Pierre, trader and explorer, 153
- Chomedey, Paul de. *See* Maisonneuve, Sieur de
- Claude de St. Agnes, Mother, 223

- Company of the Hundred Associates, 128, 240, 343
- Company of New France. *See* Company of the Hundred Associates
- Coton, Pierre, S.J., adviser to Henry IV, 5
- Couillard, family of, 158, 165
- Council of Three, administrative body, 241
- Courcelle, Daniel Rémy de, Governor of New France, 351, 356-57
- Couture, Guillaume, assistant to Isaac Jogues, 206
- Croix, Madame de la. *See* La Peltrie, Madeleine de
- Dablon, Claude, S.J., 301
- Daniel, Antoine, S.J., 254-55
- Dauversière, Jerome le Royer de la, 199-200
- Desportes, family of, 165
- Dieppe, Ursuline monastery of, 144
- Dijon, Ursuline monastery of, 223
- Dinet, Jacques, S.J., 89, 106, 143, 187, 205
- Dollier de Casson. *See* Casson, Dollier de
- Don-de-Dieu*, Pierre Chauvin's ship, 153
- Donnaconna, Indian chief, 164
- Druillettes, Gabriel, S.J., 242
- Duchesnes, family of, 165
- Eschaux, Bertrand d', Archbishop of Tours, 131, 135
- Eustache de St. Paul, Dom, Visitor General of the Feuillants, 65, 70, 76
- Fancamp, Baron de, benefactor of Montreal, 199
- Faulx, Antoine, chaplain to the Ursulines, 188
- Feuillant Order, 22
- First Relation* of Marie de l'Incarnation. *See* *Relation* of 1633
- Franchetot, Mathurin, assistant to Father Bressani, 295
- Francis de Paule, 8
- François de St. Bernard, Dom, 22
- François Xavier, Mother, 320
- Françoise de St. Bernard, Mother, sub-prioress of Tours' monastery, 72; friendship with Marie de l'Incarnation, 72-73; and Quebec Union, 306; letters from Marie, 329; death, 364
- Françoise de St. Magdeleine, Sister, 297
- Françoise de St. Michel, Sister, 281-82
- "Frère Jacques," Ursulines' gardener, 236
- Gabrielle de l'Annonciation, Mother, sister of Mother St. Joseph, 253, 269
- Gand, Sieur de, 165
- Garnier, Charles, S.J., 120, 276
- "Genevieve," Indian convert, 346-47
- Genevieve of St. Agnes, Mother, 344
- Gillette, Mother Marie. *See* Marie Gillette
- Godefroy, Jean, 165
- Godefroy, Jeanne. *See* François Xavier, Mother
- Godefroy, Jean-Paul, 165
- Gondy, Jean François de, Archbishop of Paris, 141

- Goupil, René, assistant to Isaac Jogues, 206
- Grand-Amy, Paul, S.J., 131
- Gruel, Charles de, husband of Madame de la Peltrie, 121
- Guyart, Claude. *See* Buisson, Claude
- Guyart, Florent, 5, 89
- Guyart, Jeanne (née Michelet), 5, 13-14
- Guyart, Marie. *See* Marie de l'Incarnation Martin
- Guyart, Mattieu, 175
- Harlay, Monsignor de, Archbishop of Rouen, 308, 311, 318
- Haye. *See* La Haye. George de, S.J.
- Hébert, family of, 153, 158, 164
- Henry IV, murder of, 12
- Hôtel-Dieu, plans for Canadian mission, 141; departure from France, 146; small-pox epidemic, 172; new recruits, 185; charity to Ursulines, 278-82; evacuation during Iroquois assault, 322-24
- Hubou, family of, 158, 165
- Huet, Paul, Récollet Father, 153, 159
- Hurons, language, 175-76; vanquished by Iroquois, 238, 255-56, 266-68; remnant at Quebec, 268; flight from Iroquois, 267-69; establishment at L'Île d'Orléans, 288
- Île d'Orléans, history of, 157
- Île St. Joseph, Huron refuge, 272, 276
- Indians, description of, 154-55; customs, 155; diet, 175; qualities of the Indian children, 177-79; religious customs, 180; myths and legends, 181-82; effects of alcohol on, 324; "frenchification" of, 369-71
- Iroquois, increasing menace (1641), 207-8; hostile to French, 238-40; victorious over Hurons, 262; temporary peace treaties (1645, 1654), 241-42, 299-301; increased peril to Quebec, 322-24, 332-33
- Jeanne de St. Marie, Mother, 185
- Jesuit Journal*, 232
- Jesuit Relations*, 107, 214-15
- Jogues, Isaac, S.J., first captivity, 206-7; ambassador to Iroquois, 244-45; last mission and death, 245-46, 276
- Joliet, Louis, 366
- Jumièges, Benedictine abbey of, 256
- King's Girls, 352-55, 375
- La Flèche, Jesuit school, 107, 199, 314
- Laguiole. *See* Buisson, Claude
- La Haye, George de, S.J., conferences to the Ursuline community, 97; advice concerning Marie's mission vocation, 110; concerning Ursuline Union, 193
- Lahontan, Louis, 353
- Lalande, Jeans, assistant to Isaac Jogues, 245
- Lalemant, Charles, S.J., 107, 143, 313
- Lalemant, Gabriel, S.J., 263-66, 276

- Lalemant, Jerome, S.J., superior of Huron mission, 214; appointed superior of the Canadian mission, 223; as Marie's director, 225, 231; personal characteristics, 232; concerning liturgical services, 235, 261, 274, 321; sends Father Jogues as ambassador to Iroquois, 244; returns to France, 277; visits Ursulines at Tours, 286; returns to Quebec, 314; helps with Ursuline constitution, 328; difficulty with D'Avaugour, 386; at Marie's death, 386
- La Peltre, Madeleine de, missionary vocation, 122-23; arrival at Tours, 130; departure for Paris, 135; places cornerstone for first permanent monastery at Quebec, 188; friendship with Jeanne Mance, 200; departure for Montreal, 200; return to Quebec, 215; attempt at religious life, 250, 252; lends her house to Ursulines, 283; lays cornerstone for second monastery, 283-84; death, 385-86
- Lauson, Jean de, Governor of Quebec, 256, 300
- Laval, François-Xavier Montmorency de, as Vicar General of Canada, 308-18; difficulty with Abbé de Queylus, 318; and Argenson, 318, 333; visitation of Ursuline monastery, 326-29; difficulties over sale of alcohol, 324-35, 336-37; trouble with D'Avaugour, 335-37; returns to France, 337; returns to Quebec, 342; trouble with De Mézy, 343-45; meeting with De Tracy, 350
- Le Bouthillier, Victor, Archbishop of Tours, 213, 240, 241
- Le Caron, Joseph, Récollet Father, 153, 158, 159, 162
- Le Gauffre, Thomas, suggested as archbishop of Quebec, 237, 308
- Le Jeune, Paul, S.J., superior of Canadian mission, 107; letter to Marie, 120; mission at Sillery, 167-68; instructs nuns in Algonquin, 172-73; returns to Quebec after visit to France, 221; as Marie's director, 225; member of Jesuit Council, 245
- Le Mercier, François, S.J., 284, 357, 372-73
- Lidel, Claude de, S.J., 119
- Lionnes, Martin de, S.J., 297, 299
- Louis XIII, 211
- Louis XIV, 141-42, 269
- Louis de St. Bernard, Dom, 92
- Luynes, Anne Marie de, former Ursuline pupil, 203
- Maisonnette, Paul de Chomedey de, founder of Montreal, 197-200
- Makinon, Antoinette. *See* Antoinette de St. Marthe
- Mance, Jeanne, 197, 199-200
- Marguerite de St. Athanase, Mother, 185, 223, 284, 382
- Marie des Anges, Mother, 383
- Marie de l'Incarnation Buisson, niece of Marie de l'Incarnation Martin, 212-13, 220-21
- Marie de l'Incarnation Martin, extant writings, v-vi; family ancestry, 7-8; childhood, 8-11; first mystic dream, 9-10; mar-

riage, 14-15; marriage difficulties, 17-18; birth of her son, 18; death of her husband, 19; vision of the Precious Blood, 21-22; housekeeper for her sister, 25-29; direction in prayer, 31-32; attraction to spiritual purity, 31; development of mystic prayer, 32-35; humility, 33; private vows, 36-37; attraction to religious life, 38; spirit of detachment, 39; corporal penances, 40-41, 65; service to the poor, 42; interior trials, 43-45, 53-54; devotion to the Sacred Heart, 47, 67; revelation concerning the Incarnation, 48; first revelation of the Trinity, 49-52; business acumen, 54-55; knowledge of the divine attributes, 56-57; second vision of the Trinity, 57-60; increased desire for religious life, 68; Ursuline vocation, 72-74, 78-79; trials as postulant, 82-83; third revelation of the Trinity, 85-86; clothing day, 86-87; interior trials as novice, 89-97; religious profession, 94-95; first dream of Canada, 103-4; apostolic spirit, 105-6; second dream of Canada, 114; correspondence concerning Canada, 108-14; headmistress of boarding school, 117; correspondence with Madame de la Peltrie, 126-27; departure from Tours, 135; departure for Canada, 145-46; arrival at Quebec, 149, 157; instruction in Algonquin, 173; news of Claude's religious profession, 216; advice concern-

ing mission vocations, 221-22; spiritual trials in Canada, 224-31; serious illness (1646), 233-34; liberation from spiritual trials, 249-50; reaction to Mother St. Joseph's illness, 253; advice concerning prayer, 258-59; learning Huron, 273; *Relation of 1633*, 298; *Relation of 1654*, 298-99; concerning bishop Quebec, 313; opinion of Laval, 316, 320; opinion of Governor d'Argenson, 319-20; disagreement with Laval, 326-29; serious illness 1664, 347-48; opinion of De Tracy, 349-50; increasing ill health, 362-64; on education of the Indians, 370-71; death, 386-87
 Marie de Jésus, Mother, 383
 Marie de Medici, 12
 Marie de St. Bernard. *See* Marie de St. Joseph de la Troche
 Marie de St. Joseph Gibault, Mother, 383
 Marie de St. Joseph de la Troche, Mother, missionary vocation, 129-33; change of name, 133; departure from Tours, 135-36; success with the Indian children, 176; mistress of boarders, 180; illness, 253-54; improvement in health, 269-70; teaching Hurons, 272; last illness and death, 287-91; apparition to Indian captives, 359
 Marie Dieu de la Résurrection, Sister, 383
 Marie Gillette, Mother, 174, 259
 Marmoutier, Abbey of, 18
 Marquette, Jacques, 366
 Martène, Edmond, O.S.B., 18, 94

- Martin, Abraham, 164
- Martin, Claude, marriage, 14-15;
business, 16; death, 19
- Martin, Dom Claude, O.S.B., life
of his mother, v-vii; student at
Orléans, 3; farewell to his
mother, 4; birth, 18; lost in
Blois, 76-77; reaction to his
mother's vocation, 81-82; at
Jesuit school at Rennes, 89; at
school at Orléans, 99; meeting
with his mother at Orléans,
137-38; vocation to Jesuits,
142-43; rejected by Jesuits,
187; enters Benedictine Order,
189-90; religious profession,
216; thought of mission voca-
tion, 219-20; ordination, 256-
57; at Jumièges, 256; at St.
Serge, 341; Assistant General
of Benedictines of St. Maur,
362-63
- Martin, Marie. *See* Marie de l'In-
carnation Martin
- Massé, Ennemond, S.J., 107, 276
- Mazarin, Cardinal, 308, 369
- Mazé, Peronne de, 237
- Menart, René, S.J., 185
- Meules, Pierre de, 138
- Mézy, Saffray de, Governor of
Canada, 342; difficulties with
Laval, 343-45; Ursuline land
dispute, 355
- Michelet, Jeanne. *See* Guyart,
Jeanne
- Mons, Ursuline monastery of,
371, 377
- Montigny, Abbé de. *See* Laval,
François-Xavier
- Montmagny, Charles Jacques de,
Governor of Quebec, 163-64;
168, 198, 205, 241, 244, 256
- Montreal, founding of, 197-200;
friction with Quebec, 237-38,
307-8
- Montreal Company, 198, 237
- Musset, François, 212-13
- Nenaskoumat, François-Xavier,
Indian chief, 236
- Nickel, Goswin, Jesuit General,
314
- Notre Dame des Anges, mission
of, 162
- Notre Dame de Recouvrance, par-
ish church of Quebec, 164, 183,
185
- Notre Dame de St. Foye, mission
of, 383
- Nouë, Anne de, S.J., 276
- Olier, Jean Jacques, Sulpician,
199
- Orléans, 3, 99, 137
- Ouyn, Françoise. *See* Françoise
de St. Magdeleine, Sister
- Paris, Ursuline monastery of,
127-28, 139-41, 142, 185, 223,
285-86, 359-60, 377, 383
- Perron, Joseph du, S.J., 185, 206
- Petraea, Bishop of. *See* Laval,
François-Xavier
- Philippe-Gertrude de St. Domi-
nique, Mother, 261-62, 277,
364
- Pijart, Claude, S.J., 183, 309
- Pijart, Pierre, S.J., 192
- Pivert, family of, 165
- Plains of Abraham, 164
- Ploërmel, Ursuline monastery of,
223, 302
- Poncet, Antoine, S.J., director of

- Jesuit school at Orléans, 99;
letter to Marie concerning
Canada, 115; further corre-
spondence with Marie, 120-21;
meeting with Madame de la
Peltrie, 125; on the Huron mis-
sion, 239; prisoner of Iroquois,
295-96; difficulty with De
Quen, 309-11; Marie's letters
to, 367-68
- Potel, Jacqueline. *See* Bourdon,
Jacqueline
- Prouville, Alexandre de. *See*
Tracy, Alexandre de Prouville
- Puiseaux, Pierre des, 198
- Quebec, early history, 157-63;
dissension over alcohol, 324-25;
earthquake, 337-41; contagious
disease, 334-35; size of fami-
lies, 346; growth during Talon's
administration, 366-68
- Quebec, Ursuline monastery of,
first convent, 167; first winter,
174-75; first school, 179; cor-
nerstone for permanent monas-
tery, 188; extreme poverty,
201-5; occupation of perma-
nent monastery, 208-9; success
of school, 243-44; monastery
destroyed by fire, 277-82; cor-
nerstone for second monastery,
283-84; progress of building,
285; second monastery com-
pleted, 291; monastery evacu-
ated at Iroquois invasion, 322-
24; title to land disputed, 355-
56
- Quen, Jean de, S.J., 309-11, 312
- Queylus, Gabriel de, Sulpician,
308-11, 313, 317-18
- Ragueneau, Paul, S.J., 192, 264,
267-68, 273, 292, 319, 333,
337, 359
- Raimbault, Charles, S.J., 276
- Raymond de St. Bernard, Dom,
Marie's director, 31-33, 108-
14, 364
- Récollet Friars, 107
- Relation* of 1633, 98-99, 298
- Relation* of 1654, 298-99
- Rennes, 89, 94
- Repentigny, family of, 165
- Révol, Antoine de, Bishop of Dol,
70
- Richelieu, Cardinal, 211
- Roberval, Jean-François, early ex-
plorer, 158
- Rouen, Ursuline monastery of,
359
- Sagard-Théodat, Gabriel, Récollet
Father, 153
- St. Anne, devotion to, 366
- St. Denis, Benedictine abbey of,
vi
- St. Denis, Ursuline monastery of,
359, 375, 376
- St. Ignace, mission of, 266
- St. Jacques, ship bringing the
Ursulines to Quebec, 149, 156
- St. Louis, mission of, 266
- St. Marie, mission of, 254, 263,
267
- St. Maur. *See* Benedictines of St.
Maur
- St. Michel, 198
- St. Nicaise de Meulan, Benedic-
tine abbey of, 299
- St. Pierre des Corps, 8, 18
- St. Saturninus, church of, 5, 8
- Salières, Henri, 351

- Salin, Michel, S.J., 117-18, 144, 252
Second Relation. See Relation of
 1654
 Sillery, Jesuit mission of, 167, 239, 275, 295
 Sorel, 352
 Sovereign Council of Quebec, 343
 Stonstrats, Henry, 239
 Sulpicians, 199, 307-8
 Tadoussac, trading post, 152-56, 339, 351
 Talon, Jean, intendant for New France, 350, 356, 366, 367, 370, 375, 385
 Taondechoren, Joseph, 208
 "Thérèse," captured by Iroquois, 206-8
 Tiron, Benedictine abbey of, 217
 Tours, description of, 5-7
 Tracy, Alexandre de Prouville, Marquis de, 349-50, 367
 Troche, de la, family of Mother St. Joseph, 129, 132-33, 253, 291
 Ursule de St. Catherine, Mother, 112, 194-96
 Ursuline Union, first thoughts of, 139-40; Act of Union signed, 193-94; difficulties concerning, 222-24, 227; constitutions approved, 251; trouble over, 285-87; misunderstanding in France, 304-6, 359-60
 Ursulines. *See* under individual cities
 Vannes, Ursuline monastery of, 377
 Vaubougon, Sieur de, father of Madame de la Peltrie, 121, 124
 Vendôme, Benedictine abbey of, 190, 217
 Ville Marie. *See* Montreal
 Vimont, Barthélemy, S.J., sails for Canada, 149, 152; mission at Sillery, 167; superior of Canadian mission, 172; describes sufferings of Jesuits, 192; helps with Ursuline Act of Union, 194; begs help for Canada, 205; consecrates Ursuline monastery, 209; replaced as superior, 223; member of Jesuit Council, 245; concerning bishop for Canada, 308
 Vision of the Precious Blood. *See* Marie de l'Incarnation
 Vitelleschi, Mutius, Jesuit General, 214

(Continued from front flap)

whose savage atrocities almost annihilated Quebec, and by the total loss of all their meager belongings in a fire. Yet despite these near-insurmountable odds, Mère Marie and her little community survived to become one of the largest and most active Orders in North America today.

In addition to her missionary activities, Mère Marie was a mystic and the spiritual side of her nature is thoroughly explored by the author who herself is an Ursuline nun.

Mother Denis Mahoney has written a full-dimensioned biography of a remarkable and dedicated woman of God.

Mother Denis Mahoney, O.S.U., a member of the American Ursuline Community, was born in Brooklyn, New York, and took her M.A. at Fordham and her Ph.D. at the Catholic University of America. Mother Denis is an associate professor of English literature at the College of New Rochelle.

JACKET ILLUSTRATION BY
MOTHER JUSTIN MCKIERNAN, O.S.U.

Printed in the U.S.A.

TWO OTHER OUTSTANDING CATHOLIC BIOGRAPHIES...

BLACK ROBE

The Life of Pierre-Jean DeSmet—missionary, explorer, and pioneer.

John Upton Terrell

One of the giants of the pioneer West was the Jesuit Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet. In the mid-19th century his influence with the Indians was so great that he dominated the Western wilderness. Accepted by the Indians as their blood brother because of his unceasing efforts in their behalf, he had their complete confidence. During the worst of the Indian wars no other white man could have gone alone among the hostile tribes and remained alive. Realizing his influence, four Presidents—Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, and Johnson—sought his services, asking him to perform feats they knew no other person could accomplish, or would attempt. *BLACK ROBE* captures the full flavor of the Western frontier as it portrays the life of a great missionary and explorer.

ONLY ONE HEART

Sister Patricia Jean

A lively and moving story of a pioneer nun in America. Susan Carty was an Irish immigrant girl brought to St. Louis by her family. At the age of twenty she joined the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross—the first American Order devoted solely to teaching—and became Sister Praxedes. At this time in our country's history, teaching nuns pitted their faith and hard work against ignorance, poverty and suspicion. Under the guidance of Archbishop Lamy, the celebrated figure of Willa Cather's *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, young Sister Praxedes came to understand and love the people of the Southwest. Because of her extraordinary gifts as an administrator, she was advanced while very young to be Mother Superior of her Society. Gaining the assistance of Pope Pius X, she saved the Society from a grave interdict imposed on it by an elderly bishop. *ONLY ONE HEART* is a biography as broad in scope and adventure as any historical novel.